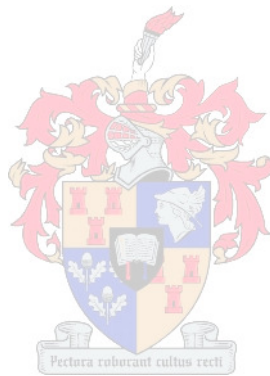


Ephesians and Artemis

**The influence of the religious climate of western Asia
Minor of the first century AD on the content and
terminology of Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:15-23**

by

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Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of
Theology at the Faculty of Theology, University of Stellenbosch.

Old and New Testament
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March 2010

DECLARATION

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "André Visagie". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'V'.

Signed:

Date: 8 February 2010

ABSTRACT

This thesis interacts with the generally held view that Ephesians is a *general epistle* with no concrete historical context and contingency, by arguing that this letter addresses particular religious concerns and beliefs of the believers of Ephesus and surrounds. A focussed literary survey of the religious-historical material of the western Mediterranean region in the first century AD is conducted, with particular attention paid to the cult of the Ephesian Artemis and the prevalence of magic. Special focus is placed upon Ephesians 1:15-23, which is exegeted using both grammatical-historical and socio-rhetorical methods of interpretation to gain insights into how the author employed and reformulated contemporary terms and concepts to demonstrate the lordship of Jesus Christ. Serious consideration of the religious and magical context of the first century Greco-Roman world when interpreting this letter to the Ephesians may open many possible avenues for future study, particularly in the area of understanding the letter in an African context.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie tree in dialoog met die algemene opvatting dat die Efesiërs-brief 'n algemene brief of omsendskrywe was, wat geen besondere historiese konteks of dringende saak aangespreek het nie. Die studie oordeel dat die brief spesifieke religieuse sake en oortuigings van die gelowiges in Efese en omgewing aangespreek het. Deur 'n literêre oorsig is daar gefokus op die religieus-historiese materiaal van die westelike Mediterreense area in die eerste eeu nC, met besondere nadruk op die Artemis-kultus en wydverspreide magie. Spesiale klem is geplaas op Efesiërs 1:15-23, wat met behulp van beide grammatikaal-historiese en sosio-retoriese metodes geëksegetiseer is ten einde te bepaal hoe die outeur kontemporêre terme en konsepte wat die heerskap van Jesus Christus demonstreer, gebruik en herformuleer het. Noukeurige oorweging van die religieuse en magiese konteks van die eerste-eeuse Grieks-Romeinse wêreld ten tyde van die interpretasie van Efesiërs mag deure open vir moontlike verdere areas van studie, veral met die oog op die verstaan van die brief in 'n Afrika-konteks.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beautiful wife, Lizanne, for her love, support and patience. Thank you very much.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my parents for their support, both emotionally and financially, as this has enabled me to complete this degree.

I am thankful to the elders of Christ Church Tygerberg who granted study leave in order for me to work on this thesis.

I deeply appreciate the guidance, wisdom, advice, tolerance and thoroughness of Professor Jeremy Punt, even when we did not see eye to eye on some issues.

I am grateful to my wife, Lizanne, for her love and encouragement.

I am also acutely grateful to our Christ Jesus, who is ὑπεράνω πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας (Ephesians 1:21) and of whom this thesis is really about, for his power, his love, his perseverance and his generosity.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Chapter one develops the topic of this thesis and presents the motivation for the study. The chapter also provides the methodology used in the study, and a chapter outline. The chapter concludes with a description of this researcher's own theological framework.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The problem researched here should be understood against the background of the alleged general nature of the Ephesian letter in the New Testament; this letter has most often been viewed as a *general epistle* or a circular letter to many and various churches (e.g. Kummel 1977:356). Lincoln states that it is the most general of all the Pauline letters and therefore relatively little has been written on or claimed to be known about its historical context (Lincoln 2008:133). Lincoln maintains that Ephesians gives us extremely little information about its recipients or their specific circumstances (Lincoln 2008:133, cf. Roberts 1983:12). Furnish agrees and writes, "affirmations and appeals are formulated in such general terms that nothing very specific can be determined about its occasion and purpose" (Furnish 1992:541).

If it can be plausibly demonstrated that the Ephesian letter was indeed sent to the churches in Ephesus and surrounds, it would greatly aid us in understanding the language, terminology and cosmological framework employed in the letter. The city of Ephesus had a unique religious context, especially bearing in mind that Ephesus boasted the grand headquarters of the goddess Artemis. Her temple is traditionally reckoned as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world (Strelan 1996:39). Mussies writes that "it was this particular cult of Artemis, which in the course of the ages, became more important than all [the city's] other local deities and was world famous by the time of Paul" (Mussies 1999:94). Evidence of a very superstitious, magic-practising, power-manipulating ethos in Ephesus is not

hard to find (Arnold 1989:22-24). These insights concerning the likely religious and magical worldview of the first century Greco-Roman world are largely, but not only, due to the discovery, or recovery, of the magical papyri. Betz states that “their discovery is as important for Greco-Roman religions as is the discovery of the Qumran texts for Judaism or the Nag Hammadi library for Gnosticism (Betz 1996:xlili). The magical papyri (PGM¹) , which include incantations, rituals, formulas, spells, recipes, curse tablets, amulets,² and so on, are a collection of documents from Greco-Roman antiquity that illustrate the beliefs and practises of the common people of the New Testament era (Arnold 2000:666, Croy 2000:929). The majority of these texts are written in Greek. Betz, in his introduction to *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, states that “Magical beliefs and practises can hardly be overestimated in their importance for the daily life of people” (Betz 1996:xli) and that “the underworld deities, the demons and the spirits of the dead, are constantly and unscrupulously exploited as the most important means for achieving the goals of human life” (Betz 1996:xlvi). We will contend that this religious worldview and the widespread belief in supernatural “powers” influencing human life exerted a significant pressure on the Ephesian author’s choice of words, concepts and terms.

Interestingly, Luke also recorded several incidents indicating that Ephesus was a hotbed of the spiritual, exorcistic and magical activity alluded to in the magical papyri (Thomas 2001:159). For example, in Acts 19:19 Luke described³ how the recent converts to Christianity who had previously been involved in sorcery came to burn their magic scrolls.⁴ Yamauchi repeats Betz’ assertion when he states,

¹ The *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (PGM) is the definitive, critical edition of the magical papyri and was compiled by K. Preisendanz. H.D. Betz has edited an English translation of this work (including a few extra magical papyri). Betz has kept Preisendanz’ original PGM references.

² Even dolls were used with magical papyri containing instructions of how to make them.

³ It is an interesting point, as Clinton Arnold also observes, that Luke, when describing Paul’s nearly three year - ministry at Ephesus, chooses to write mainly about Paul’s conflict with the followers of a pagan deity.

⁴ IH Marshall summarises his position when he writes, “there is a strong case for regarding Acts as an essentially reliable account of what it reports (1980:43); Darryl Palmer argues that Acts, in relation to similar literature of the day, should be viewed as “historical monograph” (Palmer 1992:388); Richard N. Longenecker agrees with Palmer and believes that the book of Acts corresponds with other ancient historical writing (Longenecker 1994:376). He states that “in the process of writing this history the author of Acts has his own interests, theological viewpoints and purposes in writing...though this does not mean that his narrative must be viewed as historically

“There can be no doubt that both the Old Testament and the New Testament were born in environments permeated with magical beliefs and practises” (Yamauchi 1983:169).

It would be difficult to argue for a position that this religious ethos did not influence the thinking and conduct of the Ephesian believers. It seems the author wrote this letter to *instruct and comfort* believers who were perhaps unsure of the implications of the gospel of Jesus Christ on their old religious worldview (Capes, Reeves & Richards 2007:227). “Paul’s converts had disposed of their magical charms, leaving themselves unprotected and vulnerable to their enemies (both celestial and terrestrial)” and needed to be reassured and instructed (Capes *et al.* 2007:227). The daily life of the Ephesians was dominated by these so-called “powers”, that is evil spirits, cosmic deities and spiritual forces, and these “powers” were also symbols of power, protection and strength. The Jesus that Paul preached was, in contrast, crucified like a common criminal and was treated with contempt by the religious and civil authorities. Paul himself, Jesus Christ’s commissary, was locked up in prison (Ephesians 4:1, 6:20). How then could Paul’s redefined monotheism⁵ of Jesus Christ as Lord and Messiah compete in the religious arena of the contemporary multi-theism? In authoring Ephesians, Paul sought, among other things, to deal with these concerns. Paul’s concern for the Ephesian believers and his theology of the Lordship of Jesus is particularly observed in the prayer of Ephesians 1:15-23. This will be dealt with in more detail in the chapter four.

The letter to the Ephesians’ specific context, as it relates to the perceptions about metaphysical powers, lends itself to a great deal more thought and study. It will no doubt have many implications for the Church in the African context with its

suspect” (Longenecker 1994:376); Malina and Pilch quote from G.W. Trompf’s *The Idea of the Historical Recurrence in Western Thought*, “In terms of classical historiography, [Luke’s work] could be reckoned nonfictional, useful and complying with conventional canons of history-writing” (Malina & Pilch 2008:6).

⁵ Scholarship is indebted to N.T. Wright for the term “redefined monotheism”, which according to Wright gave Paul “a powerful stance over against the various ‘powers of the world’...[which] have been defeated in the death and resurrection of the Messiah...” (Wright 2005:104)

many animistic influences and religious worldviews, derived especially from African Traditional Religion(s).

1.2 Hypothesis

This researcher will attempt to show that Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:15-23 was carefully crafted in such a way that particular terminological and semantic aspects of the contemporary thought-world had been intentionally reformulated to demonstrate the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the "powers". The particular relevance of Paul's prayers for his readers emerges properly when the religious background and the prevalence of magic in the area of Ephesus is taken into consideration.

The renowned New Testament scholar N.T. Wright has written, with regard to the power of God as seen in the resurrection of Jesus Christ in Ephesians 1, that "this power of the creator God at once sets itself apart from, and establishes itself as superior to, all the 'powers' that people might ever come across" (Wright 2004:15). The researcher will endeavour to show that N.T. Wright's assertion is demonstrated and emphasized by Paul's deliberate language and terminology in Ephesians.

Contingency greatly influences and even determines content in all of the New Testament letters (Becker 1990:xi). The discovery of the magical papyri indicates that the people of the first century world lived in a highly religious and superstitious atmosphere, in which the spirit-realm comprising of various gods, demons and supernatural "powers" played a significant role. With this in mind, it is worthwhile to consider: to what extent did the religious climate of western Asia Minor and particularly the cult of the Ephesian Artemis of the first century AD influence the content and terminology of Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:15-23? It will be argued that this religious climate with its prevalence of magic and a strong belief in supernatural "powers" significantly influenced the content of this

Ephesian letter, particularly observed in the author's presentation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

1.3 Research Methodology

Methodologically, this paper will consist of two main areas of study: A focused literature survey of the religious-historical material of the western Mediterranean region in the first century AD and particularly of the cult of Artemis and the prevalence of magic; and the possible influences on Paul's thinking regarding the spirit world will then be surveyed and summarized. The relevant passage in Ephesians (1:15-23) will be exegeted using the historical-grammatical and socio-rhetorical methods of interpretation. The grammatical-historical method of interpretation strives to discover the biblical author's original intended meaning in the text (Bruce & Stott 2001:611). The process for interpreting the text or for attempting to determine the original meaning of the text is through examination of the grammatical and syntactical aspects of the text in the language it was originally written, the historical background, the literary genre as well as theological aspects (Bruce & Stott 2001:611-612, Kaiser & Silva 1994:19). Aspects of the relatively new socio-rhetorical method of interpretation will also be employed to shed further light in seeking to determine a plausible historical background and context to the letter. The overarching aim of socio-rhetorical interpretation is to interpret the text; whilst recognizing that the language of the text is submerged in literary and socio-rhetorical contextual intricacies (Robbins 1996:2). The aspect of cultural intertexture, which refers to the interaction of the language within the text with "phenomena in the world 'outside' the text being interpreted", will be of particularly use here (Robbins 1996:40). The goal of a cultural intertexture analysis is to find references to cultural echoes within the text that may refer to ancient traditions, concepts, beliefs, values or practices (Robbins 1996:58-59). The intertexture aspect of socio-rhetorical interpretation and the grammatical-historical exegesis, combined with the focused literature survey, should allow for the construal of a credible portrayal of the religious beliefs and cosmology regarding the "powers" of the recipients of this letter and

the Ephesian author's response to such phenomena. Lastly, the researcher will briefly consider some possible implications for believers in the contemporary African context.

1.4 Motivation and contribution

Previously, Ephesians was to this researcher the most mundane book in the New Testament. This assumption was largely based on the fact that to the researcher Ephesians seemed to have no contingency; no concrete issue the author was dealing with except perhaps for the Jewish-Gentile issue in chapter two of the letter. The letter seemed very general and vague, with an over-excessive obsession with "the heavenlies".

Subsequent reading has persuaded the researcher that the author of Ephesians dealt with a very real context and contingency. The letter to the Ephesians was shaped by very real concerns and issues in the lives of the original intended readers, especially concerning their relationship with the [supernatural] "powers" (Arnold 1989: ix).

The researcher, as a Christian in Africa, regards this issue as particularly relevant within the African continent and context. The presence of the spirits and the spirit realm is almost universally acknowledged in African Traditional Religion (Moreau 1990:102). Many Africans live in fear⁶ of the spirit realm and seek protection from the spirits (Moreau 1990:120-121). Even in the Christian worldview in modern Africa, there is often a misunderstanding of God and witches and sorcerers are thought of as having greater power than the believer (Moreau 1990:126). Churches in Africa often embrace syncretistic practices to deal with the spirit realm, demonstrated by the many rituals that are simply a "Christianized" carry-over from African Tradition Religion (Moreau 1990:126).

⁶ For example, Moreau writes, "Fear of retribution for forsaking the ancestors or other spirits (by coming to Christ) was a powerful master" (1990:123).

What is the relationship between believers and the spirit realm in the African context? The teachings of the Ephesian letter and its emphasis on Jesus Christ's supremacy over the metaphysical "powers" may help us who serve in Africa to reflect on the implications of the gospel when dealing with people who have a worldview which also includes the reality of the spirit realm⁷ and supernatural "powers" (Moreau 1990:102). This hermeneutical insight,⁸ spearheaded by Clinton Arnold and others, of paying more attention to the religious and magical worldview of the original readers, has revolutionized the researcher's understanding of Ephesians and has opened many new areas for research. This letter could facilitate fruitful dialogue in South Africa to clarify the issue of the relationship between the Christian faith and the many influences from African Traditional Religion. Clarifying the issue of a Christian person's relationship to other so-called "powers" may cause Christians to be more established in their faith: Living without any fear of the spirit realm, and refraining from the age-old temptation of syncretism. Or as the author of Ephesians wrote,

“...we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming” (Ephesians 4:14 NIV),

But rather:

“We [will] all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13 NIV).

1.5 Outline of Chapters

Chapter one is an introductory chapter where the research problem, hypothesis, research motivation and possible contribution is outlined. The chapter also

⁷ The spirit realm includes divinities (e.g. tribal deities), nature spirits, malicious spirits, guardian spirits and the ancestors (Moreau 1990:102-105).

⁸ This hermeneutical approach of course needs to be tested and moderated if necessary.

includes a short summary of the researcher's own theological framework and presuppositions.

Chapter two is a brief argument for the traditional view of the Pauline authorship of Ephesians. We contend that the Ephesian letter was written to house churches in Ephesus and surrounds. Included is an overview of the likely religious and magical climate of the day in Ephesus and surrounds, paying particular attention to the cult of Artemis.

Chapter three briefly discusses and summarises the various socio-cultural and religious influences on Paul, especially as related to the concept of the "powers" found in Ephesians, bearing in mind that Paul was a trained Pharisee and wrote to a predominately Gentile⁹ Christian audience (Arnold 1993b:246). Within this chapter the researcher will briefly assess how Paul's encounter with Jesus re-aligned his Jewish perceptions and convictions, especially as it concerned Paul's view of the defeat of the "powers". The chapter ends with an attempt to draw these threads together and ask how we should understand the "power" language as used by Paul.

Chapter four provides a historical-grammatical study of Ephesians 1:15-23, employing some insights gained from the socio-rhetorical method of interpretation. Paul's teachings in the letter of Ephesians regarding the "powers" are also overviewed.

Chapter five is an attempt by the researcher to make some preliminary remarks about possible applications and implications of this study for the church in the African context.

⁹ Strelan and a few others would disagree. Strelan sees the Ephesian Christians as coming from a predominately Jewish background (Strelan 1996:165). I remain unconvinced by his arguments as it seems that the internal evidence of the Ephesian letter points to a predominately Gentile Christian readership (cf. Ephesians 1:11, 13, 2:1-2, 11, 3:1, 4:17, 5:8).

1.6 Theological Framework

Biblical interpreters are constantly and rightfully reminded that no-one approaches the text neutrally and objectively (cf. Bultmann 1960:194-200) because we are prisoners (and beneficiaries) of our era, language, thought-world, culture and context. The researcher is persuaded, as are many others, that the New Testament is a reliable and authoritative document. This does not negate the fact that each biblical author had his own context, culture, theological concerns and biases. Yet what was recorded may be said to be a credible witness to actual events and indeed the biblical authors were helped and enabled by the Spirit of God to complete their authorial task (cf. John 14:26, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 3:15-16). Edwin M. Yamauchi writes, with which the researcher agrees, that our attitude to scripture should be to view it as a “Dragoman”¹⁰ (“interpreter” or “guide”) rather than scripture as “talisman” or “specimen” (Yamauchi 2007:3). In other words, scripture must be our guide/ interpreter/ dragoman. Scripture should be studied through careful inquiry into the original setting of the texts, to determine their significance for us today. Scripture should be approached with faith and knowledge in order to do full justice to the extraordinary nature of the scriptures (Yamauchi 2007:12). The researcher’s understanding and interpretation of Ephesians 1:15-23 has no doubt been influenced by this theological framework. The grammatical-historical and socio-rhetorical methods of interpretation have also prodded the researcher towards finding possible implications of the insights gained in the text for believers that may face similar struggles and challenges in the African context.

¹⁰ “Dragoman” is a transliteration from the Spanish of an Arabic word which means “interpreter”, and which is cognate with the word “targum” or the Aramaic paraphrase of Scripture. The word was often used for guides who were provided for Europeans in the Middle East (Yamauchi 2007:13).

CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND OF EPHESIANS

Chapter two presents the main arguments for the Pauline authorship of Ephesians. It will be argued that the Ephesian letter was indeed sent to Ephesus and surrounds. Establishing Pauline authorship will be helpful, but not essential, in determining the proposed religious and magical background to the letter. Paul was familiar with Ephesus¹¹ (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:32, 16:8) and with the struggles the Ephesian believers faced and therefore would be in a position to write (or dictate) a letter that would be of particular encouragement to his recipients. Having Ephesus and surrounds as the letters' destination is helpful, but not essential, in determining the contingency of the letter as it relates to the Ephesian Artemis and the religious atmosphere of western Asia Minor in that day.

2.1 The author of Ephesians

2.1.1 The issue

The authorship of Ephesians has been much disputed in recent years (Lincoln 2008:135). Scholarship, however, is not unanimous. Hoehner shows that in the years 1991 – 2001, fifty percent of published scholars argued for Pauline authorship and fifty percent against Pauline authorship (Hoehner 2006:19).

2.1.2 The main arguments for rejecting Paul as author

Many reasons are given for holding to the non-Pauline authorship of Ephesians, most notably the impersonal nature of the letter; differing language and style that includes long sentences and clauses; a change of emphasis in Paul's theology of imminent parousia to a more realized eschatology; the letter's alleged literary dependence on Colossians; and a seemingly later setting than Paul's time, implied by the report in Ephesians 2:11-22 that the unity between Jew and Gentile had *already* been achieved. Scholars who hold to non-Pauline

¹¹ Acts 19 may be regarded as further evidence that Paul was familiar with Ephesus, although some scholars doubt the reliability of Acts in giving a true reflection of Paul.

authorship also claim that pseudonymity was a widely used and accepted practise in the first century Greco-Roman, Jewish and Christian cultures (Hoehner 2006:40). It is claimed by most that the letter was most probably written in the second century by someone in the “Pauline School” (Lincoln 1990:lxix).¹² Murphy-O’Connor thinks that the pseudonymous author of Ephesians is better viewed as an editor who worked from the basis of a genuine Pauline letter, possibly the letter to the Laodiceans (Murphy-O’Connor 2008:232). The editor’s purpose was to make the apostle’s authentic voice heard again.

2.1.3 The main arguments for accepting Paul as author

Despite the above arguments, Clinton Arnold and others have shown that there are also strong arguments for viewing the letter as written by Paul, the apostle, to the churches in Ephesus and surrounds (Arnold 1993b:245, Hoehner 2006:55, O’Brien 1999:48). If this were true, we could potentially paint a much clearer picture as to the historical context and contingency of the letter.

Ephesians has the earliest attestation of any New Testament book (Hoehner 2006:2). It seems probable that Clement of Rome (fl. 96 AD) referred to Ephesians 4:4-6 already in the first century or very early second century. Ignatius (35-107/8 AD), in his letter to Polycarp, shows familiarity with the armour of God as described in Ephesians 6:11-17.¹³ Polycarp (69-155 AD) not only quotes Ephesians 2:8-9 and many other verses in the letter but refers to the Ephesian letter as scripture (Hoehner 2006:3). Irenaeus (130-200 AD) quoted Ephesians 5:30 when he remarked “as blessed Paul declares in his letter to the Ephesians...”¹⁴ Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD) quotes Ephesians 5:21-29 and 4:13-15 as the words of *the apostle*.¹⁵ Marcion (d.160 AD) in Rome considered Ephesians to be a genuine letter of Paul. The Pauline authorship of Ephesians seems never to have been doubted in the early Church (Furnish 1992:539). This in itself provides strong historical support for Pauline authorship.

¹² Although Kummel regards Ephesians a pseudonymous writing that outrightly contradicts Paul.

¹³ Ignatius *Ad Polycarpum* 6.2 (PG 5:868).

¹⁴ Irenaeus *Adversus Haereses* 5.2.3 (PG 7:1126).

¹⁵ Clement of Alexandria *Stromatum* 4:8 (PG 8:1275-76) and *Paedagogus* 1.5 (PG 8:269-70).

It was not until the time of F.C. Baur that Pauline authorship became disputed. The first doubt was actually introduced by the English clergyman Evanson, who thought Paul could not have written that he had just merely “heard” (Ephesians 1:15-16) of the Ephesians’ faith. Some years later, Usteri doubted Pauline authorship because of the letter’s similarities to Colossians. De Wette was subsequently uncertain of the authorship due to theology and style of writing. Baur held that Ephesians should be identified with the post-apostolic era and was composed early in the second century (Hoehner 2006:6-7). O’ Brien has outlined his main reasons for accepting the traditional view of Pauline authorship (O’ Brien 1999:4ff). Since the researcher broadly agrees with O’Brien’s position I have borrowed extensively from him.

2.1.3.a The New Testament Canon

O’ Brien makes two assertions: (1) The first issue is not whether pseudonymous writings existed in the ancient world – they no doubt did – but the issue is whether they existed in the New Testament. O’Brien argues that these pseudonymous writings, which are non-canonical, confirm the fact that they were found to be pseudonymous and were therefore not included in the canon (O’ Brien 1999:40). (2) The second issue is the way in which these pseudonymous writings were handled. The general pattern is that if works were found to be pseudonymous they were excluded from the canon of authoritative writings (O’Brien 1999:40, cf. Carson, Moo & Morris 1992:495).

Meade, on the other hand, asserts that “the discovery of pseudonymous origins or anonymous redaction in no way prejudices either the inspiration or the canonicity of the work” (Meade 1986:215-216). Some scholars therefore claim that Ephesians is authoritative for Christians because it is in the canon regardless of authorship (Lincoln 1990: lxxiii). The early church held the reverse view: It was *because* Ephesians was recognised as authoritative and apostolic that it was accepted into the canon (cf. Carson *et al.* 1992:371). The early church’s closer proximity to the authorship of the letter than contemporary scholars has caused

some scholars to think it is far safer and more reliable to follow the early church's example when evaluating the authenticity of the document.

2.1.3.b The ethics of pseudonymity

E. E. Ellis believes that the pseudo-Pauline and pseudo-Petrine authors, if they were indeed pseudonymous, did not merely create a misleading title but engaged in an elaborate and complex deception to transmit their own ideas under apostolic guise (Ellis 2001:25). Most scholars holding to Pauline authorship would therefore assess the many personal references that Ellis was referring to above (e.g. Ephesians 3:1, 4:1, 3:3-4, 6:21-22) as true, rather than fabricated scenarios as part of a "rhetorical strategy" formed by someone from within the Pauline school (Lincoln 2008:136).¹⁶ Ellis quotes James Candlish who wrote already in 1891 that "in the early Christian centuries, when any work was given out as of ancient or venerable authorship, it was either received as genuine...or rejected as an imposture..." (Ellis 2001:22). The response of early Christian leaders to the Acts of Paul and the Gospel of Peter demonstrates this principle. Serapion, bishop of Antioch, embodied this principle in the counsel: "For we, brothers, receive both Peter and the other apostles as Christ. But pseudepigrapha in their name we reject..." (Ellis 2001:23). Wilder agrees that this was indeed the attitude of the early church towards the place of pseudonymous writings in his doctoral dissertation, *New Testament Pseudonymity and Deception* (Wilder 1999:156). If there is indeed pseudonymous writing in the New Testament, then these documents were clearly written to deceive their readers into thinking they were authentic and therefore the writings' presence in the New Testament is *prima facie* evidence that the writers succeeded in doing so (Wilder 1999:158). Wilder then concludes that it is his personal opinion that there are no pseudonymous writings in the New Testament (cf. Richards 2005:663). Carson also maintains that if some of the New Testament letters were indeed pseudonymous, it would be morally

¹⁶ The author of 2 Thessalonians was aware of the danger of forgeries written under apostolic guise and wrote in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2, "Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us..."

reprehensible as the letters make concrete claims that the apostle is the author (Carson 2000:862). These alleged pseudonymous letters are therefore not merely educational exercises “designed to ape the rhetorical styles of the Attic orators”, nor writings in a certain school of thought, but deliberate deceptions (Carson 2000:862). Carson, like Wilder, concludes that much more evidence must be offered before he can agree that any New Testament letter is pseudonymous (Carson *et al.* 1992:371).

2.1.3.c The natural development of human thought

Much of the alleged differences in theological emphasis and literary style in Ephesians can also be explained by creative thinking and development in Paul as new situations arose. A different emphasis is not necessarily indicative of a different author, according to some scholars (Hoehner 2006:58, Carson *et al.* 1992:307). Witherington writes in his Socio-Rhetorical commentary on Philemon, Colossians and Ephesians, “style in this case cannot provide any decisive reasons to dispute the Pauline character of these three documents, precisely because ancient writers who were rhetorically adept, as Paul was, adopted different styles for different audiences” (Witherington 2007:1-2). It is also widely accepted that Paul used an amanuensis who no doubt introduced some differences and therefore variations in style and vocabulary should not be determinative as a criterion for authenticity (Capes *et al.* 2007:72).

2.1.3.d The internal evidence

Despite Paul’s name in the greeting and the references to Paul’s life situation, there are two more points to be made from within the text of the letter.¹⁷ In Ephesians 6:19-20 Paul asks specifically for prayer. This poses a potential weakness to the theory of [non-deceptive] pseudonymity, when the later author (and the later readers) knew Paul was already dead (O’Brien 1999:43). The

¹⁷ There is also the argument that the alleged impersonal nature of the letter proves that the author was not the apostle, who had spent two years in Ephesus. However, despite the fact that Ephesians was most probably an encyclical letter, it seems that the better Paul knew a church the fewer personal greetings were given in his letters. For example, Romans contains the most greetings, a church Paul had never visited; while 2 Thessalonians has no greetings and Paul had been there a few weeks earlier.

second internal consideration is the letter's strong emphasis on the need for truthfulness (Ephesians 4:15, 24, 25, 5:9, 6:14 cf. 1:13, 4:21). Surely the pseudonymous author would have been hypocritical in authoring a document intended to deceive, however noble his motives were? Pseudonymity may have been prevalent in the ancient world, but there is no evidence to suggest that pseudonymous documents were treated as authoritative or accepted into the New Testament canon.

2.1.3.e Mountains out of mole hills (statistics on words)

Both sides of the authorship debate are armed with numerous statistics on word usage, adverbial clauses, and the like. In O'Brien's opinion, the differences in language and style are not enough to discount Pauline authorship (O'Brien 1999:8). Authors are creative, intelligent agents who may vary language and style to suit various recipients and purposes; not machines who replicate language and style.¹⁸ However, on the other side of the authorship debate, scholars believe that authors do tend to exhibit certain idiosyncratic patterns and engage in identifiable literary habits. It seems that no decisive conclusions can be made when based solely on statistics.

2.1.3.f Literary dependence on Colossians

The alleged literary dependence of Ephesians upon Colossians has caused some scholars to believe that these two letters would not have been penned by the same author. It is the view of some scholars that, considering the obvious literary dependence of Ephesians and Colossians, the two letters could not be penned by the same author. The same author would not use the same words with such different meanings (Kummel 1977:360). Other scholars view the literary dependence in another way: Carson, Moo and Morris argue that Ephesians is not a copy of Colossians, but rather demonstrates a development in Paul's thinking (Carson *et al.* 1992:306). Hoehner maintains that the ideas expressed in these two letters are essentially the same (Hoehner 2006:36).

¹⁸ To use a contemporary example, an email to one's employer would be profoundly different in language and style to an email to one's mother on her birthday.

2.1.4 Conclusion

O'Brien believes that we should hold anyone who claims to be the author of any letter coming to us from antiquity to be just that, unless there is very strong evidence to the contrary (O'Brien 1999:4). In this thesis the researcher accepts the traditional view of Pauline authorship. If Paul did author Ephesians, then Paul's pastoral concern for the house churches in Ephesus and surrounds, as well as his intimate and first-hand knowledge of the Ephesian believers' religious and magical context can be better understood.¹⁹ Paul would have encountered firsthand the issues and struggles that the Ephesian believers experienced during his ministry in Ephesus. Arguing from the perspective that Ephesians was indeed authored by Paul (Barth 1974a:41)²⁰, it seems that Paul wrote this letter to *instruct and comfort* believers who were perhaps unsure of the implications of the gospel of Jesus Christ on their old religious worldview (Capes, Reeves & Richards 2007:227). However, most of the insights presented in this paper do not depend entirely on Pauline authorship and would remain valid for non-Pauline authorship.

2.2 The Recipients of Ephesians

2.2.1 The text of 1:1

Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ τοῖς ἁγίοις τοῖς οὖσιν [ἐν Ἐφέσῳ] καὶ πιστοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ

Three of the earliest manuscripts do not contain the words “in Ephesus” in 1:1. This omission has led certain scholars to doubt that the letter was intended for the believers in Ephesus (Kummel 1977:356), even though all the earliest manuscripts, including P46, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, have the *superscription*: ΠΡΟΣ ΕΦΕΣΟΥΣ (Hoehner 2006:146).

¹⁹ If Luke is to be believed, Paul spent more than two years in Ephesus according to Acts 19.

²⁰ Barth maintains that the burden of proof lies with those who question the traditional view of Pauline authorship; although he admits that definitive proof for either Pauline or deutero-Pauline authorship is impossible (Barth 1974a:41). The authorship issue will be briefly addressed in 2.1.3.

2.2.2 Possible theories

Many ingenious theories for the early omission of ἐν Ἐφέσῳ have been suggested. For example, Marcion believed the original letter was intended for the Laodiceans. Goodspeed suggested that the letter was used as an introduction to the whole Pauline corpus (Carson *et al.* 1992:310-311). Best alleges that the letter was originally addressed “to the saints” and at a later stage it was thought necessary for the letter to have a geographical destination (Best 1997:23). Hoehner thinks it is improbable to exclude ἐν Ἐφέσῳ from the verse on the basis of only three early manuscripts (Hoehner 2006:146). Lincoln suggests that the two original church names in 1:1 were deleted by a scribe for the sake of the catholicity of the letter (Lincoln 2008:134). However, even if we accept the omission of ἐν Ἐφέσῳ in Ephesians 1:1, this letter was still clearly associated with Ephesus from the earliest traditions. The most satisfactory reasoning, it seems, is that this letter was intended as an encyclical letter to the house churches of western Asia Minor, including Ephesus. Arnold believes that there is unanimous agreement among interpreters that the Epistle to the Ephesians was written to western Asia Minor (as opposed to Palestine, Macedonia, Syria, etc.) and so there is a strong likelihood of Ephesian readership (Arnold 1989:5-6, cf. Roberts 1983:12).

2.2.3 Conclusion

The entire Roman-Greco world, particularly western Asia Minor, was steeped in mystery religions, magic and astrology. Paul’s language and phraseology would have been understood and appreciated by all. It seems very plausible that Ephesians was an encyclical letter to the Roman province of Asia, perhaps sent first to Ephesus, the hub for communication throughout the province (Thomas 2001:159). The abundance of “power” language and concepts in the Ephesian letter would have particular significance and relevance for the believers in Ephesus and surrounds who lived in a very religious and superstitious era dominated by the veneration of the Ephesian Artemis. The conclusions arrived at in this thesis therefore do not depend solely on the inclusion of ἐν Ἐφέσῳ, as

most first century Greco-Romans, not only the residents of Ephesus, would appreciate the letter's language, terminology and cosmology.

2.3 The Religious Climate in Ephesus

Gaining insights into the first century religious world of Ephesus and surrounds will aid the thoughtful interpreter in understanding more of the Ephesian author's background, thought world and possible semantic choices.

2.3.1 The Greco-Roman Religious Climate

Naturally, the social context of the first century was largely influenced by the different religions operative at the time. The contemporary western world is often accused of having a very bipolar - 'sacred versus secular' - worldview. In the first century this was not the case and Strelan notes that few, if any, distinctions were made between sacred and secular (Strelan 1996:26). Strelan also quotes Fears, who wrote, "for the ancient, religion permeated every aspect of the state's life, providing the very basis of the socio-political order" (Strelan 1996:26). The honouring of the gods was therefore believed to be of extreme importance for the well-being of the city, the family and of oneself. Strelan notes that "Prestige, money, honour and devotion to the gods went hand in hand" (Strelan 1996:136). Honouring the gods and personal honour and well-being were two sides of the same coin.²¹ The Greek gods were thought to be more powerful than human beings, but not omnipotent nor omniscient (Aune 200:919). The gods were also considered to be immanent and active; able to influence events and people on earth (Aune 2000:918, Croy 2000:929). People in the Greco-Roman era were therefore very religious and sought divine guidance and help in their everyday lives (Croy 2000:926). Prayer and magic were the two most common methods used in securing a deity's help. Indeed, the magical papyri contain many invocations to the various gods for all kinds of earthly, day-to-day help (cf. Croy 2000:928-929).

²¹ Strelan (1996:136) argues that this is the reason Demetrius was so opposed to Paul in Acts 19. Paul was robbing Artemis of honour, thereby robbing Ephesus and her citizens of honour.

2.3.2 The Ephesian Artemis

The cult of Artemis (Greek name; Roman name = Diana) was no doubt the most prominent and significant cult in Ephesus during the first three centuries of the Roman Empire (Arnold 1993a:250). Artemis was believed to be the sister of Apollo and was perhaps the most popular of the Hellenic deities (Martin 1992:464). Her name was probably derived from the adjective *ἀρτεμες* which means “secure and healthy” (Murphy-O’Connor 2008:14). Liddell, Scott and Jones, however, claim in their Lexicon that her name is derived from *ἀρταμος* (butcher), the substantive form of *ἀρταμεω* (to cut into pieces) (Murphy-O’Connor 2008:14). Her original temple in Ephesus was the biggest in Antiquity and was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Interestingly, the date of destruction of the first temple in 356 BC coincided with the birth of Alexander the Great. Popular opinion held that Artemis was away that day bringing Alexander into the world and had she been at home the disaster would not have happened (Murphy-O’Connor 2008:22).



Figure 1: An artist’s impression of the Temple of Artemis, 4th century BC
(*The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus*. 2009. ThinkQuest, US. Available at: <http://library.thinkquest.org/C0121966/temp.htm>. Accessed on: 20 October 2009.)

The goddess’ influence was evident in the city’s political, civic, cultural, educational and economic activities (Oster 1992:548). Besides maintaining the temple and its cult, money from the treasury of the Artemision was used, among other things, to underwrite the costs of a city gymnasium and to pay for the

paving of streets (Horsley 1992:147).²² In Acts 19:21-41²³ Luke records the account of Paul's economic conflict with the silversmiths' association because of reduced sales of silver shrines of Artemis.²⁴ The Ephesians had in the past fought for their livelihood when they saw it threatened (Murphy-O'Connor 2008:92). Artemis was considered to be a supremely powerful deity, even "πρωτοθρονια" (Mussies 1999:95), and so could use her power for the benefit of her followers in the face of other opposing "powers" and spirits (Arnold 1989:22). She could be deadly and remorseless towards those who threatened her chastity or offended her, as demonstrated in the many legends written about her (Martin 1992:465). In Ephesus it was primarily Artemis who was believed to give protection and blessing, with parents even dedicating their children to her (Strelan 1996:50). The Greek magical papyri give us in-depth insight into the worldview and magical beliefs of the Greco-Roman world. PGM LXX.4-24 contains a prayer/chant to Hekate, who is identifiable as Artemis²⁵ in the magical papyri, for protection from underworld punishment (Betz 1996:332). Artemis also heard prayers for safety and salvation and was able to heal (Strelan 1996:51). The main role of Artemis was therefore protectress and saviour. Most scholars argue that no sexual acts or cult prostitutions appear to have been associated with Artemis and her temple, although Arnold disagrees (Strelan 1996:72, Baugh 1999:459-460, Arnold 1989:27). Jerome Murphy-O'Connor writes that, "Artemis permeated the consciousness of the Ephesians to the point that it was a rock-bottom element in their collective and individual entities" (Murphy-O'Connor 2008:16). Ephesus, we can thus conclude, was a hotbed of spirit realm belief and veneration.

²² Document evidence shows that the financial management of the Artemision treasury attracted a lot of criticism. Even the sale of priesthoods was not uncommon (Horsley 1992:147-148). It may offer comfort to those dismayed at the high levels of corruption by public servants that corruption was a challenge even in the first century Greco-Roman world.

²³ Inscriptional evidence shows the existence of the silversmith's association, and adds weight to the historicity of this account (Horsley 1992:142).

²⁴ Silver statuettes of the goddess Artemis have been found (Murphy-O'Connor 2008:94).

²⁵ Martin believes that the darker aspects of Artemis' personality are summed up and symbolised in her frequent identification with Hecate, a goddess of witchcraft and the moon (Martin 1992:465).



Figure 2: Replica of Artemis of Ephesus

(*Artemis Ephesos*. 2009. Mlahanas, Germany. Available at: <http://www.mlahanas.de/Greeks/Mythology/Artemis.html>. Accessed on: 20 October 2009.)

It is also of interest to note that in the *Acts of John*, seemingly written in Egypt around the middle of the second century by a convert to Christianity from paganism, mention is made of the temple of Artemis when describing John's ministry in Ephesus (Murphy-O'Connor 2008:154). The *Acts of John* was condemned by the church as heretical and not a true reflection of the apostle John. Yet, it is significant that when this Egyptian convert wanted to highlight the biggest obstacle to Christianity in Ephesus, it was the temple of Artemis that came to mind (Murphy-O'Connor 2008:155). The author also, like Paul in Ephesians, identified Artemis with the work of demons (cf. Acts of John 38-44).

The influence of Artemis, however, was not only in Ephesus. Inscriptions dated 162-164 AD state that Artemis Ephesia was worshipped "everywhere" by Greeks and non-Greeks alike (Horsley 1992:154). Archaeological evidence confirms this and the Artemis cult is attested in places like Italy, France, the Greek islands and mainland, the north coast of the Black Sea and Palestine (Horsley 1992:155). The temple of Artemis in Ephesus was only destroyed in the fifth century AD when pagan temples were demolished in line with Christian policy (Murphy-O'Connor 2008:119).



Figure 3: The site of the temple of Artemis today

(*Temple of Artemis*. 2009. Wikipedia, US. Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_of_Artemis. Accessed on: 28 October 2009.)

2.3.3 Other Roman and Greek gods²⁶

Modern excavations have revealed that Ephesus, like other big cities, was a melting-pot for a multitude of Greco-Roman and Eastern religions (Strelan 1996:114). Material evidence points to the veneration of Aphrodite, Apollo, Athena, Cybele (the Mother Goddess), Heracles, Dionysus, Pan, Pluto, Zeus and several other deities (Arnold 1993a:250). First century pagans believed that their gods could help them in numerous earthly ways and sometimes even bring them into a blissful afterlife. Strelan concludes that religion in Ephesus was very eclectic and people venerated the god/s “that worked for them” and that there was “much tolerance of the gods and the powers they represented”, accounting for the harmony that appeared in that cosmopolitan city (Strelan 1996:118).

2.3.4 Empire

The Ephesian religious landscape included the Imperial cult (Hoehner 2006:84). Strelan asserts that there is little evidence for this *provincial* cult being central in Ephesian life much before 89/90 AD, when the first provincial temple was built in Ephesus (Strelan 1996:97, Trebilco 2007:31). It seems that from the first century AD onwards, the emperor was simply one of the many gods venerated in this city and coins often featured both the emperor and Artemis (Strelan 1996:104). However, as we maintain that Paul authored Ephesians somewhat before 89 AD,

²⁶ The researcher has noted the existence and influence of the Mystery Religions in the Greco-Roman world in the first century AD (Finegan 1991:193). Space however does not permit an investigation into the cults of Cybele, Mithras, Isis and Osiris etc.

the Emperor cult would not have been at its strongest and, it seems, would have had no direct influence on the Ephesian letter. However, indirectly, the inhabitants of western Asia Minor would certainly have taken note of this empire-wide religious phenomenon.



Figure 4: A drawing of a coin of the Emperor Claudius (10 BC-54 AD) showing the cult figure of Artemis at Ephesus

(*Coin of Claudius.* 2009. Ancient coins. Available at: www.forumancientcoins.com/.../reverse_diana.html. Accessed on: 20 October 2009.)

2.3.5 Magical beliefs and practices

Betz, as mentioned above, states in his Introduction to the *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* that “magical beliefs and practises can hardly be overestimated in their importance for the daily life of the people [from the second century BC to the fifth century AD]” (Betz 1996:xli). He continues, “the underworld deities, the demons and the spirits of the dead, are constantly and unscrupulously invoked and exploited...for achieving the goals of human life on earth: the acquisition of love, wealth, health, fame, knowledge of the future, control over other persons, and so forth” (Betz 1996:xlvi). Arnold defines “magic” as the belief that supernatural powers could be harnessed and used by appropriating the correct technique (Arnold 1993c:580). Magic was the belief that the supernatural powers could be manipulated to perform certain and various tasks. H.H. Rowley likewise writes, “The line between magic and religion is not always easy to define, but broadly we may say that wherever there is the belief that by a technique man can control God, or control events, or discover the future, we have magic” (Yamauchi

1983:175). In the magical papyri various spells, formulae, charms and incantations are found addressed to the various gods in the Greco-Roman world.

2.3.6 Magic in Ephesus

Metzger states that “Of all ancient Greco-Roman cities, Ephesus the third largest in the Empire, was by far the most hospitable to magicians, sorcerers and charlatans of all sorts” (Thomas 201:160). Hoehner maintains that Ephesus in the first century was known as a centre for the practice of magic (Hoehner 2006:86). Arnold agrees and adds that the cult of the Ephesian Artemis also had a close connection to the practise of magic in the city and region (Arnold 1993a:250). The Ephesian Artemis possessed authority and control over a multiplicity of the demons of the dead and also the demons of nature (Arnold 1989:22). Strelan, however, thinks that although magic was widespread and popular in Ephesus and surrounds, it can not be particularly associated with Artemis (Strelan 1996:87). The evidence seems to contradict Strelan. Magic was widespread and commonplace in Ephesus and ordinary men and women practised its various forms in order to secure help and favours from the gods.

2.3.7 Types of Magic

2.3.7.a Love potions and love charms

The use of love charms and potions were widespread in the Greco-Roman world (e.g. PGM IV.2720) (Yamauchi 1983:179). Love potions were made out of anything from ground lizard to the spleen from an innocent youth! Many of the incantations in the magical papyri, for example, to withhold sleep from the beloved until her heart fills with desire towards the supplicant, are directed to the deities. These incantations demonstrate the conviction that the gods could certainly intervene in human affairs and even influence matters-of-the-heart.

2.3.7.b Curses

The most common curses against individuals were placed on thin lead sheets, which were rolled up and pierced with a nail (Yamauchi 1983:184). A typical

example of a frequent curse is a curse used by charioteers against their rivals. The curse enlists the help of a spirit and begins with:

“I conjure you up, holy beings and holy names; join in aiding this spell, and bind, enchant, thwart, strike, overturn, conspire against, destroy, kill, break Eucherius, the charioteer, and all his horses in the circus tomorrow at Rome...” (Yamauchi 1983:186).

No doubt these potential curses caused some degree of fear and anxiety, and as a result we find spells against fear and spells to dissolve spells (e.g. PGM LXX. 26-51).

2.3.7.c The Evil Eye

This widespread superstition was the fear that someone could cause harm to someone else by his baleful glance²⁷ (Yamauchi 1983:187). The Evil Eye could apparently be warded off by spitting into one's coat. Amulets were also worn for protection to ward off the evil eye.

2.3.7.d Protection

A popular means of protection in the Greco-Roman world against various dangers such as snakes, the evil eye and demons was through the use of amulets (e.g. PGM LXXXVI.1-2) (Yamauchi 1983:195). Amulets can be described as magical objects, usually worn around the neck, that may have been inscribed or not (Yamauchi 1983:195). The arrangement of the letters in certain words on these amulets was considered to influence the amulet's magical power (Bonner 1946:39). The need for protection against other-worldly, spiritual forces was widespread in the first century and even Emperor Augustus was known to carry with him a piece of seal skin as a protection against lightning (Yamauchi 1983:197).

²⁷ A large percentage of scholarship contends that this is the thought-world influencing Galatians 3:1.



Figure 5: A typical Greek amulet with a pseudo-Hebrew inscription

(*Greek Amulet*. 2009. Grimoires. Available at: <http://grimoires.wordpress.com/2009/04/10/late-antiquity-the-coptic-wizards-hoard-2/>. Accessed on: 26 October 2009.)

2.3.7.e Spirit guides

Often in the magical papyri we find incantations summoning particular gods/ apparitions/ assistants/ demons for various purposes, including the deliverance from Hades in the after-life (e.g. PGM LXII.24-46).

2.3.8 Hostile powers

Fear of the demonic realm, evil spirits and cosmic powers were a very important factor stimulating the use of magic (Arnold 1989:18, 1993b:246). Arnold also takes note of the finding of Howard Kee, that formulas in the magical papyri are largely apotropaic, that is, for the protection from demons (Arnold 1989:18). Even Lincoln admits that the Roman world of the time held a worldview that saw the cosmos as “hostile” and “inhibited by demonic powers opposed to human well being” (Lincoln 1990:lxxxiv). Lincoln also admits that the mystery religions and magical rites were popular and that protection from demonic powers was a major issue (Lincoln 1990:lxxxv, cf. Thomas 2001:160). PGM LXII (dating back to the third century AD) contains an incantation to the “god of gods” and says in lines 37-38:

“I request that you keep me healthy, free from terror and free from demonic attack.”

People of this era earnestly desired access to supernatural power in order to protect themselves from earthly and heavenly foes, including sickness and demons.

2.4 Conclusion to chapter two

Magical belief and practice was indeed widespread²⁸ and very definitely associated with the various gods of the Greco-Roman world. Yamauchi maintains that the early Christians lived in a world steeped with occult beliefs and practices (Yamauchi 1983:199). Ephesus was no exception. Strelan notes that “those who did abandon Artemis for Christ would not have done so without maintaining some syncretism in their thought if not also in their practise” (Strelan 1996:130). Lincoln adds that in such a religiously plural and superstitious society, “religious syncretism gained ground” (Lincoln 1990:lxxxiv). Yet, surprisingly Strelan does not find any evidence of such syncretism and therefore concludes that there is very little evidence that Christianity attracted adherents to the Artemis cult (Strelan 1996:130). Arnold and others conclude the opposite. It seems probable that many Artemis devotees left the cult and followed Jesus Christ, perhaps still holding on to some former superstitious beliefs and practices. One of the purposes of Ephesians is Paul’s emphasizing the superiority of Jesus Christ over such “powers”. Therefore, according to Paul, the Ephesian believers did not need to fear these “powers” or cling to previous protective (or other) magical practices (Arnold 1993b:247). Paul in Ephesians emphasises the risen and exalted Jesus who “reigns over those spiritual powers most feared by the citizens of Asia Minor. Paul believed that these powers have been subjected to Christ by the actions of God” (Capes *et al.* 2007:230).

We may elaborate further and suggest that as a result of Paul being in prison (cf. Ephesians 3:1, 4:1, 6:20), the Ephesian believers may have thought that Paul’s ‘god’ Jesus was not powerful enough to protect Paul against the power of the Roman gods or indeed the power of the Emperor. According to Tenney,

²⁸ PGM LXIII.26-28 even contains a spell to make a contraceptive.

vanquished people in Greco-Roman pantheistic religion tended to abandon faith in the gods who were either too weak or too fickle to aid them (Tenney 1993:67). The natural question would be, “Why did the local deity not protect his people?” (Tenney 1993:67). If Jesus Christ was a powerful deity, surely Paul, his devotee, would not be languishing in a Roman prison? Paul, knowing the religious background of the Ephesians, wrote in Ephesians 3:13:

“I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory” (Ephesians 3:13 NIV).

Paul wanted to stress that Jesus Christ is all-powerful: powerful enough to protect the Ephesian believers and Paul himself. Indeed, even Paul’s imprisonment was part of the divine purposes of God, according to Paul in Ephesians 1:11.²⁹ Paul thus intended the letter to the Ephesians to encourage the Ephesian believers by reminding them of the triumph of Christ Jesus and by emphasizing the supremacy of Christ Jesus over other “powers”. The recipients, according to Ephesians 6:21-22, would have been further encouraged because they would have learnt that Paul was well and still eager to proclaim this gospel.

“Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing.

I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you” (Ephesians 6:21-22 NIV).

²⁹ “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will...”

CHAPTER THREE: PAUL'S WORLDVIEW CONCERNING THE SPIRIT WORLD

In chapter two, it was argued that there is good reason to view Ephesians as written by Paul himself to the believers in Ephesus and surrounds. The letter's emphasis on power, particularly in Paul's prayer in 1:15-23 would have been particularly relevant to the religious worldview of the inhabitants of western Asia Minor who were immersed in pagan concepts of power and "powers". Paul's view concerning the "powers" that dominated the lives of the people of Ephesus would have been informed by a number of factors and influences. It is to these influences that we will now turn. The aim of chapter three is to identify and summarise the likely influences upon Paul's thinking concerning the spirit world in which, we will argue, the "powers" operated. These influences were varied and were derived from a range of different perspectives.

3.1 Old Testament Background

Most scholars are now convinced that Paul's Jewish identity was one of the most significant factors in his theology and worldview (Carson *et al.* 1992:222, Wright 1997:20). Paul quotes the Old Testament more than ninety times in his letters and often uses Old Testament allusions, images and categories. The Old Testament formed Paul's conceptual world (Carson *et al.* 1992:222). Capes, Reeves and Richards write, "When [Paul] came to faith in Christ, he did not think he was leaving the faith of his fathers; rather he thought he was entering the fulfilment of the covenant promises God made to Abraham, Moses, David, and the rest of his kin" (Capes *et al.* 2007:257). Not only was Paul by his own admission a "Hebrew of Hebrews" by birth (cf. Philippians 3:5), but by conviction he was a member of the Pharisees (cf. Philippians 3:5, Acts 23:6, 26:5). There has been much scholarly debate over the nature of first century Pharisaism, but what is clear is that the Pharisees were very zealous for the Torah (Kim 1984:41). Thus, pre-converted Paul was greatly concerned about learning and

observing both the written and oral Torah, even more so than his contemporaries (cf. Philippians 3:6).

Below is a summary of some of the main elements of the belief of the people of Israel as evidenced in the Old Testament that would have informed Paul's theology and worldview (cf. Capes *et al.* 2007:257ff, Dunn 2003:28-31, Wright 2005:83-90).

3.1.1 One God

One of the central teachings of the Old Testament, as stated in the Shema, is the oneness of God (cf. Deuteronomy 6:4-6). God is the sole Creator, Sustainer, Rescuer and Judge. He is all-powerful and he does what pleases him. No one on earth or in heaven can match his glory or worth. Paul believed that there was only one true God and this God, YHWH, was omnipotent and sovereign.

3.1.2 One people of God

Israel believed itself chosen by God to be his own, as emphasized in Deuteronomy 7:6-8.³⁰ Dunn states that "Israel alone had the true perception of God because the one God had given Israel the special revelation of himself...because of all the nations God had taken Israel as his own" (Dunn 2003:43). Pre-converted Paul continued to believe that God was calling a people for himself - a "righteous" people who observed the Torah.

3.1.3 One future with God

Paul was a Pharisaic Jew with apocalyptic expectations³¹ (Capes *et al.* 2007:259). Paul would have appreciated the apocalyptic passages in Daniel picturing God overthrowing the kingdoms of the world. Jews saw time as a "progression of the ages, and looked forward for the age to come to release them

³⁰ "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 7:6-8).

³¹ Becker sees 'Jewish Apocalyptic forms' as the essence of Paul's gospel (Becker 1990:19).

from the evils at present...of a piece with all this is the thought of a final judgment for the cosmos, presumably to bring 'this present evil age' to a close" (Dunn 2003:41). Paul therefore expected God to vindicate himself at the end of the age, usher in the universal reign of God, and destroy all his enemies (e.g. Daniel 2, 7, 9) (Becker 1990:25, Wright 1997:30). Paul expected to see God's people in God's place under God's rule.³² YHWH would triumph over all the unrighteous and earthly and heavenly opponents. The righteous would share in his glory.

3.1.4 The existence of evil powers in the Old Testament

Ferdinando believes that although references to demonic forces are few and far between, the concept of supernatural demonic forces is present in the Old Testament (Ferdinando 1999:134).

3.1.4.a Satan

Contrary to the views of some scholars (Tate 1992:471), it seems that the Old Testament authors did reflect a consciousness of evil, albeit more restricted than in the New Testament. These reflections can be posited as the first rumblings of the notion of the supernatural figure of Satan, which is further developed in the Second Temple Judaism and in the New Testament (cf. Hamilton 1992:985-989). It seems that Paul, reflecting Second Temple Judaism's thinking, assumed the existence of supernatural, non-human beings that are opposed to YHWH, including a Satan and other spiritual powers, who were also understood to be operative in Israel's history (Hamilton 1992:988, Elgvin 2000:154). Scholars in the twenty-first century may doubt Satan's existence in the Old Testament, but certainly the Jewish people in the centuries before and during Jesus' lifetime, whether rightly or wrongly, assumed Satan's existence. We can infer this by the many references to Satan, the devil and [evil] spiritual powers in the Intertestamental literature. For example, in the Wisdom of Solomon 2:23-24 it says:³³

³² Biblical Theology scholars owe a debt of gratitude to Graeme Goldsworthy for this helpful insight and illuminating paraphrase of the biblical concept of the "Kingdom of God" (cf. Goldsworthy 1981:41)

³³ Cf. 1 Enoch 69:6 where a fallen angel called Gader'el misled Eve in the garden.

“God created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of his own eternity, but through the devil’s envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his party experience it.” RSV

The snake was also deemed to be Satan in post-biblical Judaism. For example, in the Apocalypse of Moses 16:4-5 we find a conversation between Satan and the snake in which Satan asks the snake if he can speak through him (Page 1995:15). The word “Satan” is found only in Job 1-2, Zechariah 3:1-2 and 1 Chronicles 21:1, and he is not a figure of major importance. Yet, these three passages presume some familiarity by the original readers with the concept of Satan. Satan is a malinger of character (Job 1-2), an accuser of God’s servant (Zechariah 3:1), and a seducer of Israel’s royal leader (1 Chronicles 21:1) (Hamilton 1992:987). Modern theologians may differ as to who or what the term “satan” refers to, but Intertestamental Jewish authors certainly saw Satan as a supernatural figure opposed to God and God’s people, as hinted at in the Old Testament (Page 1995:37).

The Old Testament worldview is fundamentally monotheistic and YHWH is sovereign (Ferdinando 1999:144). The Intertestamental literature and New Testament seem to be more dualistic in outlook for various debatable reasons - such as Iranian influences (cf. Ferdinando 1999:176). Dualism is a term used to designate a way of thinking that sees reality consisting of two independent and mutually irreducible principles or substances, in our case God and Satan, that are in fundamental conflict with each other (Cressey 1990:291). However, even in the Intertestamental literature and New Testament it would not be accurate to speak of a thorough-going dualism, as God is portrayed as being in ultimate control and certain to judge all those, including the supernatural “powers”, that are in opposition to him (Ferdinando 1999:178-179). Paul, in his letters, reflected second temple Judaism’s belief in a celestial Satan.

3.1.4.b The other gods of the heavens

Psalm 82 is generally said to deal with evil supernatural beings (Page 1995:54):

- 1 A psalm of Asaph. God presides in the great assembly; he gives judgment among the "gods":
- 2 "How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Selah
- 3 Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.
- 4 Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.
- 5 "They know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.
- 6 "I said, 'You are "gods"; you are all sons of the Most High.'
- 7 But you will die like mere men; you will fall like every other ruler."
- 8 Rise up, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are your inheritance. (Psalm 82:1-8 NIV)

God is pictured as presiding over a divine assembly and delivering judgment over the gods for failing to properly execute their godly duties. God condemns them to death, like mortals.

Psalm 82 clearly alludes to Deuteronomy 32:8, which says:

When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of God.³⁴ (Deuteronomy 32:8 NIV)

This verse seems to facilitate the beginning of the belief that each nation had its own guardian deity or god or "principal angel/s" (Hurtado 1998:7). This belief is assumed elsewhere in the Old Testament e.g. in the book of Exodus YHWH predicts he will execute judgments "on all the gods of Egypt" (cf. Exodus 12:12). The existences of other "gods" are assumed, but YHWH will defeat them. The

³⁴ The NIV renders the last phrase as the "sons of Israel", but it seems "sons of God" is the preferred reading according to the LXX and a Hebrew fragment found at Qumran.

existence of other gods is also implied in the command to “have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). Many other passages also assume the existence of other supernatural beings (cf. Joshua 24:15, Judges 2:12, 6:10, 10:6, 11:23-24). Solomon believed in their existence, for the author of 1 Kings rebuked him for worshipping “Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites” (cf. 1 Kings 11:3). Yet, without failure, YHWH is presented as supreme and dominant over the gods. Israel may only worship YHWH, for he alone is the only true God and YHWH will ultimately defeat and punish all other gods (e.g. Isaiah 24:1-2). It is highly probable that Paul, like the Intertestamental authors, assumed the existence of a cosmos where other beings besides humans and YHWH existed.

3.1.4.c Fallen Angels, Demons and Evil Spirits

The discussion of the identity, nature, and role of demons in the Old Testament is complicated by terminology, historical developments and theoretical issues (Kuemmerlin-McLean 1992:138). Most generally accepted is the view that demons were seen as “evil spirits” who live in ruins and in the desert and were responsible for illness and natural disaster (Kuemmerlin-McLean 1992:139). The author/editor of the Pentateuch, it seems, viewed the pagan cults of the nation and their gods as the work of demons. In Deuteronomy 32:16-17 it reads:

They made him jealous with their foreign gods and angered him with their detestable idols. They sacrificed to demons, which are not God—gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear. (Deuteronomy 32:16-17 NIV)

Demons may further be described as hostile supernatural opponents of the people of God (Arnold 1992a:56, Elgvin 2000:153). The psalmist in Psalm 106:37-38 had the same attitude towards the religions of the Canaanites:

They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons. They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was desecrated by their blood (Psalm 106:37-38 NIV).

In Psalm 96:5 the Hebrew text reads “all the gods of the nations are idols”, while the LXX reads “all the gods of the nations are demons”. The LXX, it seems, reflected the Jewish conviction that the so-called gods of the nation were demonic (Arnold 1992a:57). Isaiah 34:14 is another contentious verse:

Desert creatures will meet with hyenas, and wild goats will bleat to each other; there the night creatures will also repose and find for themselves places of rest. (Isaiah 34:14 NIV)

This verse describes the ultimate desolation of Edom. The word rendered “night creatures” is widely accepted to be the name of a female night demon, which was a familiar figure throughout the ancient Near East (Page 1995:72). The NRSV simply transliterates the word as “Lilith”.³⁵ The name “Lilith” also appears on an ancient amulet as part of a Canaanite incantation against demons. Although the meaning of the inscription is much debated, Page and others believe that Liliths were regarded as flying demons that constituted a danger to human beings (Page 1995 72:73, Kuemmerlin-McLean 1992:139).

1 Samuel 16-19 tells of an evil spirit from YHWH that afflicts Saul (cf. 1 Samuel 16:14-16, 23, 18:10, 19:9). The notion that an *evil* spirit is from YHWH has created some debate; nevertheless Page and others believe that the author/editor of 1 Samuel wishes to demonstrate that even *evil* spirits are under divine control and cannot act independently³⁶ (Page 1995:76-77). In 1 Kings 22:19-23 and its parallel in 2 Chronicles 18:18-22, there is the account of a lying spirit volunteering in the heavenly assembly to mislead King Ahab. Whatever we may think about the historicity of the account, it is likely that the lying spirit was understood to be an independent spiritual being because of the setting of the heavenly assembly (Page 1995:78). Again the existence of other spiritual beings, inclined to evil but under YHWH’s ultimate control, is assumed. Wink confirms the belief by the Old Testament authors in “not divine, but transcendent, suprahuman” beings opposed to God and human faithfulness (Wink 1984:23).

³⁵ The RSV translates it as “night hag”, and the NASB as “night monster”.

³⁶ Judges 9:23 tells a very similar story of God sending an evil spirit to cause tension and unrest.

According to Daniel 10:13, 20-21 and 12:1, there was also the belief that angels exercise influence over specific nations. The “princes” of Persia and Greece are portrayed as hostile to the purposes of God. The Theodotian version of Daniel translates “prince” as ἄρχων, while the LXX translates it as στρατηγός. The Testament of Simeon 2:6-7 again reflects the Jewish belief in evil supernatural powers by using the word ἄρχων when referring to the evil spirit who tempted Simeon. It seems that the Ephesian author, in line with Old Testament and Intertestamental authors (Kotansky 2000:270), assumed the existence of powerful, heavenly beings who are antagonistic towards God (Elgvin 2000:153). The Old Testament authors, however, make no connection between demons and the figure of Satan (Kuemmerlin-McLean 1992:140).

3.1.5 Summary

The Old Testament authors generally adhere to the ancient Israelite notion of the existence of personal, evil, supernatural beings. This belief did not water down their monotheism, as they reserved their veneration for YHWH the one true God, who would judge all other so-called gods. During the Intertestamental period this belief was further developed. Many passages in the Old Testament also forbid the Israelites from delving into the “demonic” realm or worshipping or consulting other gods (e.g. Deuteronomy 18:9-14). Paul, who grew up reading and studying the Hebrew Bible, would no doubt be influenced by this belief and attitude and worldview, especially as it became further developed in the Second Temple period (cf. 1 Enoch 53:3, 54:6, Jubilees 10:12, 23:29, 40:9).

3.2 Second Temple Judaism

Recent scholarship has shown quite convincingly that Paul studied and learnt the Old Testament in the context of the Judaism of his day (Carson *et al.* 1992:223). Second Temple Judaism was a “vibrant mix of religion, faith, culture and politics...[awaiting] the coming of God’s kingdom, of Israel’s redemption, hoping that when that day dawned one might have a share in the coming vindication and blessing” (Wright 2005:3-4). Studies have shown that first-century Jewish

people, like the pre-converted Paul, did still hold strongly to the uniqueness and sovereignty of YHWH (Hurtado 1998:9-13). Hurtado has found that in the Greco-Roman Jewish texts there appears a big concern to assert the universal sovereignty of God [YHWH], even when the spiritual powers of evil are portrayed as opposing God (Hurtado 1998:13). These rebellious spiritual powers in the Intertestamental literature like Satan/ Beliel/ Mastema, as in the case in the apocalyptic writings, are portrayed to be under God's judgment and unknowingly serve God's ultimate purposes of exposing the wicked and testing and approving the righteous (Hurtado 1998:13).

Of particular relevance to this study are the many references in the Intertestamental literature to the various "powers" found in Paul's letters. Wink has shown that the many and various words³⁷ used for the "powers" in the Intertestamental literature are used in the most comprehensive sense, referring to heavenly and earthly, divine and human, good and evil powers (Wink 1984:39, cf.152-163). There is little doubt that Paul would have been aware of these words.³⁸ Wink concludes that the world that produced *Jubilees* and *1 Enoch* very much believed in the existence of evil powers. And it was a world that "sought redemption from these 'powers'" (Wink 1984:24). The Book of *Jubilees* 5:7,9 sees the wicked as led astray and deceived by Satan and the demons. It also says that at the arrival of the Messianic kingdom Mastema/Satan will be judged (*Jubilees* 23:29-30). *1 Enoch* 19:1-2 also describes a day when [evil] angels will be judged. Satan is sometimes referred to as Belial, the "Worthless One" (Hamilton 1992:988). Belial is "the spirit of darkness" (for example, see Testament of Levi 19:1), the one who exercises control over the world and the one who controls evil people (e.g. 1QS 1:18, Testament of Levi 3:3).

In the two centuries leading up to Jesus, there was an increase in interest in the spirit realm of angels, spirits and demons in Jewish literature (Arnold 1992a:64).

³⁷ Ἀρχή, ἐξουσία, δύναμις etc. (Wink 1984:13-22).

³⁸ However, Wink sees Paul as already starting the process of demythologizing the powers and concludes that the powers do not have a "separate, spiritual existence", but are "inner aspects of material or tangible manifestations of power" (1984:104-105).

There was a concern to name good and evil angels and classify them in a hierarchy, and this obsession continued into later years.³⁹ Paul, however, escaped this temptation and deliberately used more abstract and general terms. Evil powers/ spirits were also believed to be able to exert influence on human beings (cf. 1 Enoch 7-8, Jubilees 11:1-8). For example, according to the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, every individual must struggle against the evil spirits of deceit who are ruled by Beliar/ Satan (cf. Testament of Reuben 3:3, 6:3) (Arnold 1992a:68). The demonic, therefore, became a major force in popular Jewish thinking leading up to the time of the New Testament (Arnold 1992a:71). These Jewish writers looked forward to a time of deliverance from the evil powers and the establishment of a new age of peace. Jewish writings looked forward to a divine intervention at some time in the future which would bring about the “kingdom of God”, the age to come when all God’s opponents would be destroyed (Marshall 1997:45). According to the Testament of Levi 18:12, Belial/Satan would be chained by God’s Holy Spirit.⁴⁰ The Testament of Judah 25:3 even has him cast into a consuming fire.

In some of the Intertestamental literature we also see the continued expectation of a Messiah who would establish the kingdom of God/ Messianic kingdom. Messianic expectation was usually focussed on the restoration of the Davidic kingship (cf. 2 Samuel 7). 1 Enoch pictures a son of man/ chosen one/ messiah coming from God to execute judgment on the ungodly and establish an age of blessing (e.g. 1 Enoch 62: 9-10, 14-16). The Psalms of Solomon and the Dead Sea Scrolls also provide instances of Messianic expectation, portraying a Davidic Ruler who comes to defeat God’s enemies (the Gentile nations) and to restore the kingdom to Israel (Collins 1998:158).

The expectations, interpretations and thought world promulgated in the Intertestamental literature form part of the Second Temple Judaism’s ‘vibrant mix’ to which Paul was exposed. We may argue to what extent the pre-converted

³⁹ Apparently 123 different demons are identified in Rabbinic Literature (Arnold 1992:67).

⁴⁰ Jesus might have had this tradition in mind when he said in Matthew 12:28, “...if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

Paul held similar convictions to those mentioned above, but nevertheless we may assume that Paul broadly assented. The Jewish Paul thought of the world as filled with evil spirits who are hostile to humanity (Arnold 1992a:89). Paul was looking forward to the kingdom of God when God would send his Messiah, reward the righteous, restore Israel, judge all his enemies (including the Romans and the evil spiritual powers) and establish a golden age of peace.

3.3 The Greco-Roman world

Paul quite clearly grew up⁴¹ knowing the Greek world well and it is to be expected that he would make use of some of the language and borrow some of its concepts (cf. Carson *et al.* 1992:222). It is unlikely that the Greek world was in any way a “source” of Paul’s teaching, but rather its language and concepts may be understood as the tool or medium used by Paul to expound his teachings (Carson *et al.* 1992:222). The world of western Asia Minor in the first and surrounding centuries, as shown in 2.3 above, had a profound interest in supernatural power and magic. People believed that the gods were very real and could help and protect them in numerous ways, both in this life and the next. It seems likely that Paul used terminology and concepts from this thought world in order to communicate his gospel effectively.

In the magical papyri we find numerous words and phrases that are seemingly borrowed by Paul in his letter to describe the supremacy of Christ and the benefits of believing in his gospel. For example, in PGM 1.149ff we find a spell to Selene [Artemis] for her to send an “assistant” or a “mighty angel” for protection whilst travelling and, after death, to protect the suppliant against “Hades”. The “assistant” is able to provide protection because “to him *all things* are subject” (line 181). This kind of spell and language may have influenced Paul’s choice of words when referring to Jesus. In Ephesians 1:22 it reads:

⁴¹ There is much scholarly debate as to *where* exactly Paul grew up, but seeing that it was at any rate in the first-century Mediterranean world, the point would be true regardless.

“And he [God] subjected *all things* [everything] under his feet and appointed him to be head over *everything* for the church.”

PGM IV.1596-1715 contains a spell to Helios. Helios is addressed as κοσμοκράτωρ (line 1600). Ephesians 6:12 reads:

“Because our conflict is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world rulers (κοσμοκράτορας) of this darkness, against the evil spiritual hosts in the heavenly realms.”

The term κοσμοκράτωρ is not found in any Jewish writings until the Testament of Solomon, which was written somewhere between the first century and the fifth century (Arnold 1989:65). Both the above magical papyri probably come from the fourth century AD, although the term κοσμοκράτωρ was used already in a second century magical papyri elsewhere (Arnold 1989:65). These later magical papyri probably reflect an earlier usage of the term/s (Arnold 1989:65). In the Greco-Roman thought-world it was also in the “heavenly realms” or in the “kingdom of the air” that the hostile “powers” operated (cf. PGM IV.569) (Arnold 1989:60, 78). Paul seemingly used and reformulated these and other Greco-Roman terms and concepts to communicate effectively his message concerning Jesus.

3.4 Jesus and God’s Victory

In more recent years, scholars have taken more seriously the influence of Jesus of Nazareth on Paul’s thinking. Seyoon Kim (1984:55-66) and David Wenham (1995:396) argue that Paul’s conversion to Jesus Christ profoundly and fundamentally influenced Paul’s thinking in a number of areas. Betz states that the greatest change in Paul’s thinking was brought about as a consequence of Paul’s vision of Christ on the road to Damascus (Betz 1993:194). Paul’s conversion took place after he saw Jesus who “appeared” to him on the road to Damascus (1 Corinthians 9:1, 15:8). Paul describes his conversion as a

revelation of Jesus the Messiah (Galatians 1:12).⁴² The risen and exalted one appeared to Paul accompanied by the radiance of his glory (Kim 1984:56). Paul was convinced that Christ Jesus was YHWH's promised Messiah who would inaugurate the long-awaited kingdom of God. Paul did not abandon his monotheism when he became a follower of Jesus; rather Paul's monotheism was "recast to include Jesus within the divine identity" (Capes *et al.* 2007:258). Paul resolutely maintained that the one God had revealed himself in Jesus in the midst of the characteristic polytheism of the Greco-Roman world (Dunn 2003:49-50). Wright adds that "Paul's refined monotheism gave him a powerful stance over the various 'powers of the world'...they have been defeated in the death and resurrection of the Messiah" (Wright 2005:1054). Paul continued to believe that God was calling a people for himself, but now he held to the conviction that membership of the new people of God was open to Jews and Gentiles alike and was obtainable by virtue of Jesus' work on the cross (Capes *et al.* 2007:259). Paul believed that the church is the earthly manifestation of the people of God⁴³ and therefore shares in all the privileges and benefits of belonging to God (e.g. Ephesians 1:3-14), including protection from the "powers" (e.g. Ephesians 6:10-12).

3.4.1 The Issue

An interesting question one may ask is how much exactly of the Jesus-tradition was known to Paul? As noted above, Paul wrote in Galatians 1:12 that his gospel was not perverted by human opinion but received as a "revelation" from God and in Galatians 1:16 there is a mention that God was pleased to "reveal" Jesus Christ to Paul. Paul claimed that his gospel was not the result of a theological symposium, but given to Paul by God himself. Paul came to belief that Jesus was the Messiah, as the rebellious Judaistic sect "the way" had been doggedly maintaining (cf. Acts 9:2). Yet, much of the traditions about Jesus could not possibly have been given to Paul on the Damascus Road. Paul had to

⁴² Kim thinks that Paul's use of the word ἀποκάλυψις suggests that the Christophany was an anticipation of the parousia (Kim 1985:56).

⁴³ Notice that in 1 Corinthians 1:2, 2 Corinthians 1:1 and Galatians 1:13, the church is described as the church "of God". This is especially seen in Ephesians where Christ is said to have "loved the church" (5:25) and the church is the earthly manifestation of the wisdom of God (3:10).

have had input from the other apostles and associates of Jesus. Paul also claimed to have “received” the gospel and then to have passed on what he had learnt (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-11). Paul must have learnt other facts about Jesus from the other apostles and Christians before him (Wenham 1995:396). Far from Galatians 1:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-3 being contradictory to each other, it seems that in Galatians 1 Paul was convinced of the *truth* of the gospel by a supernatural revelation and then in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul wrote that what was received from others was the *content* of the gospel, that is, “the historical facts about Jesus” (Kim 1984:70, cf. 67-74). Which historical facts did Paul receive? Which oral (and maybe even written) traditions concerning the teachings and actions of Jesus did Paul learn?⁴⁴ Did Paul have access to Mark or Q or both (Wenham 1995:391)? Studies have been done around these questions (e.g. Hollander 2000:344-349). Wenham concludes that there are plenty of Markan and Q traditions echoed in Paul⁴⁵ and also “M” and “L” sayings (material only recorded in Matthew or Luke) (Wenham 1995:391). Of relevance to this study are the traditions concerning Jesus’ encounters with, and teachings about, Satan and demons. “Satan” and “demons” were to Paul the agencies behind the “powers”, as shall be explained later in this and the next chapter.

Many scholars have come to recognise that Jesus’ miracles were not primarily given as proof of his divinity, but rather object lessons as to the nature of the kingdom of God that Jesus claimed to inaugurate (cf. Mark 1:15-16) (Blomberg 1984:427). The oppressive powers like demons and leprosy that held people in bondage were subject to Jesus’ rebuke. Thus the apostle Peter, in Luke’s words, could accurately describe Jesus as “doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil” (cf. Acts 10:38) (Hughes 2006:3). The point being that Jesus’ ministry, which was part of the Jesus-tradition Paul received, could be described as a frontal attack on, or at the very least a conflict with, Satan and the

⁴⁴ Cf. 1 Corinthians 11:23, “For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread...” Paul thus received instruction concerning Jesus’ words and actions during his last supper before his crucifixion.

⁴⁵ Hollander concludes, “it seems obvious that the apostle was familiar with some sayings, notions, or ideas which were transmitted orally and perhaps also in a textual form in the early Church as authoritative sayings of the historical Jesus (Hollander 2000:349).

demons. Indeed, the story of Jesus is told against the backdrop of the demonic (Page 1995:88). The “kingdom of God”, which has its roots in the Old Testament and Jewish apocalyptic literature, denotes a time of “[God’s] sovereign rule by which God’s people would be made socially, physically and spiritually whole and all forms of evil and the resistant wicked would be destroyed” (Guelich 1991:36). Guelich adds that Jesus’ teachings and actions as related to Satan and the demonic are integral elements of his earthly ministry and are to be read in light of the promised salvation that was to mark the eschatological establishment of God’s sovereign rule in the day of salvation (Guelich 1991:37). Paul, it seems, would have understood this idea of judgment from statements like Colossians 2:15:

“...having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (Colossians 2:15 NIV).

And Romans 8:28-29:

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:28-29 NIV).

Paul believed that Christ Jesus was inaugurating the kingdom of God and therefore that the judgment and overthrow of God’s enemies, including the evil “powers”, had begun. Jesus’ ministry and the history of the early church take place against the backdrop of a worldview in which the existence of evil spiritual forces is a reality (Ferdinando 1999:183). The synoptic records view Jesus as assuming the existence of these forces and see Jesus’ ministry, at least in past, as confronting and overthrowing these forces.

3.4.2 The Trial in the Wilderness⁴⁶

All three synoptic gospels record the incident of Satan tempting Jesus in the wilderness right after Jesus' baptism. Page believes that the temptation account's proximity to the baptism account indicates that Jesus was tempted specifically as the Messiah, and not as a "normal" human being (Page 1995:93). Ferdinando views the temptation narratives as serving to provide the reader with "hints" of the cosmic context in which the ministry of Jesus should be seen (Ferdinando 1999:211). Although it would be inadequate to interpret the temptation account in a woodenly literal sense, there is no good reason to doubt that the account is grounded in the historical experience⁴⁷ of Jesus (Page 1995:89). Jesus was driven by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan, evidently as a demonstration that it was God's will that Jesus should be put through a time of trial. Satan is portrayed primarily as a tempter seeking to entice Jesus into disobedience, not unlike the snake of Genesis 3. Satan seeks to frustrate the realization of the kingdom of God, but the temptation is unsuccessful (Ferdinando 1999:212). Unlike Adam and Eve and the people of Israel who were tested in the wilderness after the Exodus, Jesus did not fall into temptation (Arnold 1992a:77). Jesus overcame the evil one.

3.4.3 The Beelzebul Controversy⁴⁸

Few New Testament scholars would dispute the truth of the synoptists' portrayal of Jesus as an (successful) exorcist (Ferdinando 1999:213). According to Matthew and Luke, the Beelzebul controversy was sparked by an exorcism that had been performed by Jesus. Some⁴⁹ accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons. The name Beelzebul would have

⁴⁶ It appears that Mark and Q contained two different traditions/versions of this account (Page 1995:90).

⁴⁷ Craig L. Blomberg bemoans the fact that "the problem for the modern historian is that he or she does not have the option of explaining events in terms of demon possession or miracle" (1984:425). He adds that surprisingly these days "even typically critical continental circles are increasingly recognizing that anti-supernaturalism is philosophically and scientifically indefensible and are admitting that a solid core of the gospel miracle stories is undeniably factual" (1984:427).

⁴⁸ Matthew 12:22-32, Mark 3:22-30 and Luke 11:14-26. It is thought that there were versions of this dispute in Mark and Q (Page 1995:99).

⁴⁹ The Pharisees in Matthew; the teachers of the law in Mark; and the crowd in Luke. Possibly all three.

been well understood as a euphemism for Satan⁵⁰ (Twelftree 1992:164). Jesus replied that it would be unreasonable to think that this exorcism had been performed by the power of Beelzebul because that would be self-defeating (Page 1995:103). The exorcism, according to Jesus, was a sign that the “kingdom of God” had come and the coming of the new age of God’s rule has overcome the power of Satan (cf. Matthew 12:28) (Guelich 1991:38). This truth is further explained by the analogy of plundering the house of a strong (cf. Matthew 12:28) or armed man (cf. Luke 11:21-22). One can only do this if an even stronger man disarms the homeowner. Jesus is the stronger man who disarms Satan. This analogy symbolizes Jesus’ ministry. Jesus’ practice of exorcism both declares and demonstrates that the power of Satan had been broken by the promised arrival of the “kingdom of God” into history. The defeat of God’s enemies, as anticipated in the Old Testament and in the Intertestamental literature, had commenced (Guelich 1991:39).

3.4.4 Like Lightning from Heaven⁵¹

In a response to a report by some of his followers that demons had become subject to them, Jesus declared, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (cf. Luke 10:18).⁵² This saying is rather cryptic and the language used probably indicates that Jesus is speaking figuratively⁵³ (Page 1995:109). It is difficult to know to what event Jesus was referring to. Was he speaking about an event that took place during his earthly ministry or an event that will take place in the future? Various arguments have been put forward. Some think it refers to Satan’s defeat during Jesus’ time in the wilderness and others contend it points to Satan’s sudden anticipated destruction at the end of time. Others maintain it speaks of Satan’s defeat at the cross or at the resurrection.⁵⁴ Whatever view we may hold, it seems Jesus believed that the victories of his followers over demons provided a demonstration that Satan had been decisively defeated (Page 1995:111).

⁵⁰ Satan and the demons were clearly connected in Jewish thought.

⁵¹ Luke 10:17-20

⁵² This saying is unique to Luke.

⁵³ The verb “to see” (θεωρέω) is used in Acts for visions.

⁵⁴ Interestingly, Arnold sees this as Satan storming from heaven in rage as a result of Satan’s power and influence being depleted (Arnold 1992:83).

3.4.5 The Parable of the Soils⁵⁵

Jesus told of a sower sowing seed, which was the word of God (cf. Luke 18:11) or more precisely, the message about the kingdom (cf. Matthew 13:19). Some of the seed took root in good soil and bore a great harvest; other seed, among other things, was eaten by the birds and so bore no harvest. The birds were identified with the devil or Satan or the evil one in the interpretation of this parable (cf. Luke 8:12, Mark 4:15, Matthew 13:19). Both Jesus and his Jewish listeners had been exposed to the Intertestamental literature, wherein Satan was frequently associated with birds (e.g. Jubilees 11:5-24, Apocalypse of Abraham 13:3-7, cf. 1 Enoch 90:8-13) (Page 1995:115). One can thus infer that Jesus was claiming here that the devil opposes the preaching of the message of the kingdom, by stirring disbelief in human hearts (Page 1995:116).⁵⁶ Satan is pictured as an active opponent to the preaching of the gospel.

3.4.6 Conclusion

Jesus' words and actions demonstrated that the kingdom of God was at hand and had indeed arrived in his ministry. The new age had begun and the punishment of God's enemies, particularly the evil spiritual powers, had commenced. We find no hint of any cosmic or ethical dualism in Jesus' ministry as portrayed in the synoptic gospels or in Q (Guelich 1991:41). We find no hint of struggle in Jesus' encounters with the demonic. In the exorcism accounts, instead of resorting to various devices, formulae and incantations for the removal of demons (as seen in the magical papyri), Jesus simply speaks a word of command and the demon leaves its victim.⁵⁷ It is difficult to argue that Paul, as a convert to Christ Jesus, would not seek to learn as much as possible about the historical Jesus' acts and teachings. It seems that Paul had access to the Jesus-

⁵⁵ Matthew 13:1-9, Mark 4:1-9 and Luke 8:11-15. The term "parable of the soils" seems more appropriate as one of the main points Jesus alluded to in this parable is the fact that it was the soils that differed. The sower is largely incidental. Wenham, contrary to widely held scholarly opinion, believes that this parable and its interpretation is authentic and indeed influenced Paul (Wenham 1995:86-90)

⁵⁶ Echoes of this parable may possibly be seen in 2 Corinthians 4:4 where Paul says, "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ..."

⁵⁷ The use of the name "Jesu" in many incantations against demons found in the magical papyri seems to indicate that Jesus was considered to be a very successful exorcist.

traditions in some form or another and drew upon these traditions in order to realign his thinking concerning, among other things, Satan, demons and the powers of darkness (Wenham 1995:388-397). Paul believed that the one true God had sent his Messiah and that the inauguration of the “age to come” had begun and would be fully consummated some time in the future.

3.5 A cursory glance at Paul’s view of Satan and the powers of evil, including the “principalities” and “powers”

According to N.T. Wright, Paul believed that the God of Israel “had done for Jesus of Nazareth, in the middle of time, what [he] had thought he was going to do for Israel at the end of time” (Wright 1997:36). God had vindicated Jesus through his resurrection and demarcated Jesus as the true Messiah. Wright argues that in doing so, God had in fact indicated that the “age to come (that is, the “kingdom of God”) had already begun...even though the present age was still proceeding...The present age and the age to come overlapped” (Wright 1997:37). Paul believed that he and indeed all believers were living in the end times; the times of fulfilment that the promised Messiah had brought about by his birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and still present rule (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:11) (Knight 1996:6). Paul believed that the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus had achieved a great victory over sin, death and Satan (including all the various “powers”) (cf. Dunn 2003:230). Paul believed that these spiritual forces had therefore lost the war; but, as in the case of many defeated armies,⁵⁸ these forces continue to oppose God and his people. The followers of Jesus, according to Paul, now continue the battle against the “powers” strengthened and armoured by God himself (cf. Ephesians 6:10-12) (Capes *et al.* 2007:261).

Paul believed that the “powers” were in fact created by the pre-existent Jesus (cf. Colossians 1:16), that they were led in triumphal procession as defeated enemies at the cross (cf. Colossians 2:15), and that they were subjected invisibly but decisively at that point to the rule of Christ (cf. Ephesians 1:21). One day the

⁵⁸ In a more contemporary context, we remember that many of the German soldiers kept fighting after D-Day until hostilities finally ended on VE-Day in World War II.

“powers” will acknowledge that they are subservient to Jesus (cf. Philippians 2:10-11) and will be finally destroyed at the consummation of the kingdom of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:24, Romans 16:20); no doubt because they are enemies of God (cf. McDermott 2006:10). Caird writes, “The idea of sinister world powers and their subjugation by Christ is built into the very fabric of Paul’s thought, and some mention of them is to be found in every epistle except Philemon” (Caird 1956:viii). The phrase, “principalities and powers”, according to Reid, is shorthand for a variety of terms employed by Paul to refer to powers that were created by God but are in some way hostile to Christ and the church (Reid 1993a:746).

At present, Paul argues, these powers act to thwart the purposes of God in the world by attempting to deceive human beings (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 2:1-2) (Arnold 1992a:93). Paul argues further that one way in which the powers are able to deceive human beings is through pagan religions. Paul contends, like the author or editor of Deuteronomy, that there is a close connection between idolatry and demonic activity (cf. Deuteronomy 32:16-17). It is evident that Paul believed that sacrifices to an idol (of Artemis/ Apollo/Isis) were really an offering to demons (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:20-21) (Arnold 1992a:95, Paige 1993:210). Paul believed that Satan could, using circumstances and people, tempt, outwit, deceive, impede, and harass believers (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:5, 2 Corinthians 2:11, 11:14, 12:7, 1 Thessalonians 2:18) (Guelich 1991:45, Reid 1993b:865). For Paul, Satan is alive and well and a daily threat to believers as he opposes the purposes of God in the world.

3.5.1 Paul’s Terminology

As mentioned above, Wink and others have shown that Paul’s language for describing the powers has its roots in the Intertestamental literature (including the LXX), and especially Jewish Apocalyptic literature (Wink 1984:13-22, 151-163).

ἄρχων/ ἀρχή can be translated as “rule”, “dominion” or “principality” (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:25, Romans 8:38, Ephesians 1:21, 3:10). ἀρχή is a more

abstract term for power and may be used to refer to an office, position or role of power. ἄρχων refers to the incumbents-in-office (Wink 1984:13). These terms can denote heavenly or earthly powers - good or bad - and can refer also to Satan himself. These terms are all found in the Intertestamental literature (e.g. Jubilees 10:7-8) (Wink 1984:151-156).

ἐξουσία can be translated as “authorities” or “powers” (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:24, Ephesians 1:21, 2:2, 3:10, 6:12). In the LXX, the earthly rulers who are subject to the Most High are called ἐξουσίαι and in the Testament of Levi 3:8 this term refers to a (good) spiritual being (Arnold 1993c:749). The singular of ἐξουσία is found in PGM IV.1193, where the suppliant prays to Helios for protection from every ἐξουσία and from all harm. To Wink, the most significant fact about ἐξουσία is that it refers to the structural dimensions of power in an impersonal capacity in the majority of its uses in the New Testament (Wink 1984:15). Ἐξουσία, it seems, is a very broad term encompassing all kinds of heavenly and earthly authority figures.

δύναμις can be translated as “powers” or “might” (cf. Romans 3:38, Ephesians 1:21). The term quite commonly refers to military “forces” in Jewish literature and “heavenly powers”. The LXX uses δύναμις to translate *Sabaoth* in the expression “lord of hosts” (Wink 1984:159). In 2 Kings 17:16, Israel forsook the Lord and instead worshipped all the host (δύναμις) of heaven. Jubilees 1:29 refers to the “powers (δυνάμεις) of heaven” (Wink 1984:160). In PGM XXIIb the following prayer appears:

“A prayer of Jacob. Father of the Patriarchs, Father of all things,
Father of the δυνάμεων του κόσμου, God of angels and archangels.”

In Philo of Alexandria, some of the references to δύναμις would appear to be evil angels (Wink 1984:17). The term can then refer to evil spirits, spiritual powers, angels, God or earthly might.

Θρόνος can be translated “throne” (cf. Colossians 1:16). In the LXX the term is used to denote kings and dynasties and also the throne of God. It seems that this term is a symbol of government or authority, like a sceptre or crown or ring (Wink 1984:18-20).

κυριότης can be translated as “dominion” or “lordship” (cf. Colossians 1:16, Ephesians 1:21). The image is that of the realm over which a κυριος rules (Wink 1984:20). Wink believes that only the context may be used to determine the meaning of this term, as scholars are unsure of its pre-Christian usage (Wink 1984:20-21). It may refer to the spheres of spiritual influence that were formerly not under the lordship of Jesus (Arnold 1993c:749).

The phrase τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας (plural) τοῦ σκούτου τούτου can be translated as “world rulers of this darkness” (cf. Ephesians 6:12). It seems that this term has no pre-Christian usage and did not appear in Jewish writings until the testament of Solomon (100AD) (Arnold 1989:65). Κοσμοκράτωρ is used for the god Serapis and the god Helios in the magical texts (e.g. PGM XIII.618-640, PGM IV.1596-1715). It seems that Paul either invented the term or borrowed the term from the “market place” because it was in current usage in the first century AD, as indicated by the magical papyri, some dating back to the second century AD (Arnold 1989:65). The evil nature of this “power” - and indeed its spiritual nature - is emphasized by the next phrase in Ephesians 6:12: πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις, translated as “evil spiritual hosts in the heavenly realms” (Arnold 1993c:749).

ὄνομα can be translated as “name” or “title” (cf. Ephesians 1:21). The concept of “name” simply represents the whole (Wink 1984:21). In the Old Testament the “name of YHWH” stood for YHWH (cf. Psalm 54:1). In the Intertestamental literature we find the same thing. Jubilees 36:7 says that the cosmos was created by the “name” of YHWH. Jesus demanded the name of the evil powers (cf. Mark 5:9). The religious rulers asked Peter and John, “By what name did you

do this?” (cf. Acts 4:7) (Wink 1984:22). In the magical papyri this term often occurs in incantations to the gods (Arnold 1989:55). For example, PGM CI.52 reads:

“You holy names (ὄνοματα) and these powers (δυνάμεις), confirm and carry out this perfect enchantment; immediately, immediately; quickly, quickly!”

The term must therefore include every power with a title - whether divine, diabolical or human (Wink 1984:22).

Paul was aware of the religious and magical thought world of Ephesus and that of the greater western Asia Minor. He used familiar language that was readily understandable for his readers to describe the “powers” that were feared in Ephesus and which exerted influence over the daily lives of those living in western Asia Minor. It would be difficult to argue that the readers would not identify Artemis and the various deities of the Greco-Roman world with the “powers” as the term was used by Paul. This will be described in more detail below. The majority of terms used by Paul were no doubt birthed from the LXX, the Jewish Intertestamental literature and contemporary religious language. Paul would have found the terms convenient and suitable to employ in reference to the various Greco-Roman gods and spirit beings of popular religious beliefs. The diversity and abstract nature of Paul’s language may have been deliberate: The comprehensive, all-inclusive terminology for the “powers” could potentially refer to the plethora of “powers” in the religious worldview of the first century AD.

3.5.2 The Issue

As will be shown, there are numerous ways in which to interpret and understand these “principalities and powers”. Do these “principalities and powers”, as termed by Paul, refer to “spiritual powers” or “human agents/ agencies”? (Guelich 1991:47) Alongside these binary viewpoints is another view: that Paul was in fact cognizant of the two alternative readings and used the term to refer to both “spiritual powers” and the evil powers that control the socio-political structures of life (e.g. Barth 1974a:174). If we believe Paul’s language to include spiritual

powers, the question must be asked: Did Paul believe in the real existence of (evil) spiritual powers or was he just using contemporary language and concepts when he himself thought differently (Dunn 2003:108-109)? A further question one may ask is how did first-century people think about these entities? How should they think about these entities according to Paul?

Scholars over the years have held various views. Martin Dibelius wrote from the perspective of the History of Religions school (O'Brien 1993:112). Dibelius considered Paul to be a man of his time and therefore would have believed in a world dominated by supernatural forces.⁵⁹ Christ has defeated these "powers" but, because we no longer believe in spirits and devils, Paul's language has no meaning for us (O'Brien 193:112).

For Rudolph Bultmann in the 1950's, the "powers", like the rest of the New Testament, has to be demythologized (O'Brien 1993:113). In other words, the interpreter of the New Testament should seek to understand the existential truths behind the myth.⁶⁰

Oscar Cullman also in the 1950's argued that Paul's "powers" language should have a two-fold interpretation in that it refers to both human authorities and angelic "powers". He notes especially the use of ἐξουσία in Romans 13:1-7 as definitely referring to earthly powers (Arnold 1989:44-45). Cullman argues that whenever ἐξουσία occurs in the Pauline letters in the plural or in the plurally used singular with πᾶς (except for Titus 3:1), it clearly refers to invisible angelic powers (O'Brien 1993:117). This dual reference view, though accepted by many, has also been criticized.

⁵⁹ The telling title of Dibelius' book can be translated as "*The World of Ghosts in Paul's Belief*" (Barth 1974:174).

⁶⁰ Demythologization refers to the interpretation of biblical myths in terms of the understanding of existence that comes to expression in the myths themselves. It does not refer to the elimination of myth but to its reinterpretation in existentialist terms (Soulén & Soulén 2001:45).

G.B. Caird in 1956 emphasized the “structural” dimension in his book, *“Principalities and Powers”*, but changed his position twenty years later when he wrote a commentary on Ephesians (Arnold 1989:45). In this commentary, Caird sees the powers as spiritual beings that operate through the earthly structures (O’Brien 1993:148-149 no.47).

Hendrik Berkof has been influential in the “powers” debate. He published *“Christ and the Powers”* in 1962. According to Berkof, the “powers” are understood by Paul to be “structures of earthly existence” (Arnold 1989:45). Paul used the language of Jewish apocalyptic, but used it differently; he demythologized it (O’Brien 1993:120).

Markus Barth in 1974, in his commentary on Ephesians, viewed the “principalities and powers” in Ephesians as probably referring to earthly institutions and structures and “angelic or demonic beings that reside in heaven” (Barth 1974a: 174). The “principalities and powers” are at the same time intangible spiritual entities and concrete historical, social, or psychic structures or institutions (Barth 1974a:800).

Wesley Carr in 1981, in a monograph entitled *“Angels and Principalities”*, took quite a different view and maintained that the “powers” were indeed spiritual beings, that is, angels, but that these are angels subservient to God, and not hostile to him (O’Brien 1993:126).

Recently there has been a spurt in more conservative and traditional interpretations of this phrase. Such is found in Clinton Arnold’s book *Powers of Darkness* (1992), which interprets the “powers” in Ephesians to be personal, supernatural, evil beings. In his book, Arnold states that Paul “never showed any doubt regarding the real existence of the principalities and powers...Paul saw the ‘powers’ as angelic beings belonging to Satan’s kingdom” (Arnold 1992a:169). Arnold believes that Paul, as a man of his time, used the language and concepts of Jewish apocalyptic and borrowed terminology from the contemporary Greco-

Roman religious world to clarify his teachings. Paul did not demythologize the “powers” to the abstract notions of “sin” or “death”; nor did he see them as a kind of spiritual “atmosphere” (Arnold 1989:69).

Peter O’Brien in 1993, in *Principalities and Powers*, also views Paul as using the language and concepts of Jewish apocalyptic to describe “supernatural cosmic forces, a vast hierarchy of angelic and demonic beings” (O’Brien 1993:135). He argues that although the “powers” are meant to be regarded as personal, supernatural agencies, the “principalities” and “powers” do bring their destructive influence upon all earthly structures. Earthly structures may then become demonic (O’Brien 1993:142-143).

Perhaps the most influential study of late has been *Naming the Powers* by Walter Wink, published in 1984. Wink splendidly overviews the pre-Christian usage of Paul’s “power” language. By and large Wink’s overview concludes that Paul’s terms are “both heavenly and earthly, divine and human, spiritual and political, invisible and structural...good and evil” (Wink 1984:100). Wink believes that Paul has already started demythologizing the “powers” and we should follow his lead (Wink 1984:104). It seems Wink is not far from Bultmann in his understanding of the “powers” and Wink believes that Satan is the “actual power that congeals around collective idolatry, injustice, or inhumanity” (Wink 1984:105). Wink does not believe that the “powers” have an independent existence, but rather that they are the *innermost essence* of earthly agencies (Wink 1984:105). Wink’s view answers Dunn’s original question regarding Paul’s use of the language and concepts of hostile spiritual “powers” understandable to first century society, whilst not actually holding to those convictions himself. Paul had demythologized the powers.

While many agree with Wink’s interpretation, there have been many criticisms. According to Arnold, O’Brien and Bultmann, the foundational issue is the interpreter’s presuppositions (Arnold 1992a:176, O’Brien 1993:132). Many interpreters cannot accept the notion that the “powers” are personal, supernatural

beings that were defeated by Jesus in his death and resurrection (O'Brien 1993:132). Wink candidly remarks in his Introduction to *Naming the Powers* that, "It is impossible for most of us to believe in the real existence of demonic or angelic powers as it is to believe in dragons, or elves, or a flat world" (Wink 1984:4). He also makes the astute observation that, "It is a virtue to disbelieve what does not exist. It is dangerous to disbelieve what exists outside our current limited categories" (Wink 1984:4). What might surprise one is that Wink presents a wealth of evidence to support the belief that the "powers" language certainly did include the concept of personal, supernatural powers. Yet, he denies that Paul could have referred to these spiritual beings. It might be argued that the biblical interpreter's presuppositions are even bigger than one would think.

Arnold criticises Wink for not understanding Paul in his first-century setting. Arnold believes that Paul would certainly not have spoken about the "powers" – if he meant social structures – for Paul's original readers would certainly not have understood that language as referring to social structures.⁶¹ Paul was well aware of the Jewish convictions about the existence of a spirit realm as per the Intertestamental literature. Furthermore, Paul was conscious of the prevalence of the "powers" language in the Greco-Roman religious world, as demonstrated in the magical papyri (Arnold 1989:47-51). There seems to be little doubt that such spiritual powers can and do work through earthly structures and agencies, but to identify the "powers" with or as earthly structures (even the innermost essence) is possibly reductionistic (O'Brien 1999:144). Best also, I think rightly, maintains that if we view the "powers" as purely earthly and observable forces, then we cannot see them as already overcome by Christ Jesus (Best 2006:179).

3.5.3 Summary

It is the researcher's view that Paul did intend the "powers" to be identified with spiritual, supernatural agents, in step with the recipients' contemporary worldview. The many and diverse terms for the "powers" may well be used to designate earthly powers, as in various Intertestamental and New Testament

⁶¹ Best agrees and writes, "For [the Ephesian] readers the powers are supernatural and cannot be reduced to, and explained in, natural terms" (Best 2006:179).

texts. However, in *Ephesians*, the following aspects of Paul's terminology appears to favour the more traditional interpretation of the "powers" as supernatural, spiritual agents in step with contemporary views: (i) Paul speaks of them as "in the heavenly realms", not on earth (cf. Ephesians 6:12, 3:10); (ii) the "powers" language is used in the same context as "the devil" and the "evil one" (cf. Ephesians 6:11, 16); and (iii) Paul refers to the "powers" specifically as "not flesh and blood" (cf. Ephesians 6:12). In contrast to contemporary attitudes to the spiritual "powers", Paul believed that these "powers" had been defeated by a supreme power. It should also be remembered that in the first century worldview the distinctions between sacred and secular, physical and spiritual, were not very evident, thus Paul's designation of the powers to be "in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12) did not exclude these "powers" as influencing, controlling and manipulating earthly "powers" and structures.

3.6 Conclusion to chapter three

Paul very much believed in the existence of supernatural beings inhabiting the spirit realm (Forbes 2001:67), as demonstrated particularly well by the phrase he uses, ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις, when referring to these "powers" (Ephesians 6:12). Paul's thinking was informed by his Jewish roots in the Old Testament, the then-current interpretation and understanding of the Old Testament, the polytheism of the Greco-Roman world and, perhaps most crucially, his conversion to and understanding of Christ Jesus and the Jesus-tradition. Paul deliberately used terms and concepts associated with the spirit realm that were known and comprehensible to both Jewish and Gentile converts. We might ask, along with Wink, why Paul uses ambiguous words and phrases that are "made up overwhelmingly of impersonal, abstract terminology" (Forbes 2001:67), and that could even have been used to include earthly "powers". It may be that Paul intended his readers to understand that the "spiritual forces of darkness in the heavenlies" can indeed also influence the social, political, judicial and economic structures of our world (cf. Ephesians 6:12) (O'Brien 1993:142). It may be more likely that Paul deliberately employed comprehensive terminology that could

include any and all spiritual powers known and unknown in the Greco-Roman world of the first century AD. Paul believed that the promised reign of God had begun with the coming of Jesus the Messiah. As expected, the “powers” had been defeated by the Messiah, particularly by the death of Jesus (cf. Colossians 2:15). The “powers” had been defeated but not destroyed. Now, according to Paul, in the overlap of the ages, believers are involved in a “power struggle” with a defeated enemy, and are not part of an unwinnable or dualistic war (Guelich 1991:48). In his letter to the Ephesians, it appears that Paul was determined to remind the believers of these truths.

Many scholars today want to demythologize the “powers” in Ephesians to denote social structures or the inner essence of organisations. This demythologization is largely due to the anti-supernaturalism in modern academics. However, the anti-supernaturalism paradigm was certainly not a part of the first century Greco-Roman world. Neither is it compatible in understanding the “powers” in current African theology, a matter that will be addressed later on. It is only when the modern scholar successfully detaches himself/herself from the cynical anti-supernaturalism paradigm, that he/she can adequately understand the impact of Paul’s message on the original readers.

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CHAPTER FOUR: THE LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS

Chapter two presented the reasons for considering the letter of Ephesians as originally written to the believers in Ephesus and surrounds and took note of the religious climate of the Greco-Roman world. This religious worldview included the notion of supernatural “powers”, such as gods and evil spirits, which influenced the daily life of the population. Evidence also suggests that the practice of magic was widespread as people sought to manipulate and control the “powers” by spells, potions, amulets and incantations. Evidence suggests that the city of Ephesus was a particular hotbed of supernatural belief and veneration as the temple of Artemis was located within the city precinct. It is not unreasonable then to assume that the Ephesian believers were influenced by their former religious allegiance and practices and needed clarity about their newfound faith, including their expected stance on the “powers” whose veneration and manipulation dominated Greco-Roman life.

In chapter three we attempted to demonstrate that Paul not only believed in the real existence of the “powers” as spiritual beings opposed to God, but also believed that in and through Christ Jesus, all known and unknown “powers” had been defeated. This insight would have many implications for the believers in Ephesus, who were possibly maintaining some syncretism or some former superstition in their thoughts, if not also in their practices with regard to their former religious allegiances. It seems entirely probable to infer that the believers in Ephesus and surrounds, like many inhabitants of western Asia Minor, would have lived with some degree of fear of the “powers” and their influence, and may even have feared retribution from these powers, because of their newfound religious commitment to Christ Jesus. The original readers of Ephesians would certainly have understood the language of the “powers” to be referring to powerful spirit-beings who could afflict, and from whom protection was sought (Ferdinando 1999:270).

Chapter four now provides a closer look at Paul's teachings regarding the "powers" in *Ephesians* bearing in mind the above-mentioned plausible socio-religious context. Paul's prayer in *Ephesians* 1:15-23 will come into sharp focus as his concerns for the Ephesian believers are especially evident in his prayers. A more detailed picture of the Ephesian believers' concerns and possible struggles will be sought in the process of mirror-reading and listening for the "subtle and indirect" echoes in the text. These are taken from the socio-religious tradition of Ephesus and surrounds and, perhaps of greater value, from the Christian subculture (Robbins 1996:60). The exegesis below assumes that the text is not only an artefact of a particular culture, but is also a response to that culture (Tate 2006:344). The grammatical-historical and socio-rhetorical methods of interpretation have been employed to interpret the text.

4.1 Preliminary considerations

4.1.1 Genre of Ephesians

Deissmann a century ago made a distinction between "epistles" (literary works intended for public interaction) and "letters" (un-literary, private, occasional communication) (Hoehner 2006:69). Lincoln claims that we cannot formulate a clear-cut classification system in terms of ancient epistolary and rhetorical categories (Lincoln 1990:xxxvii). The majority of scholarship believes that *Ephesians* broadly follows the normal pattern of a Greco-Roman letter with some variations, similar to the other Pauline letters (O'Brien 1999:68-69, Lincoln 1990:xli). The opening and closing certainly shows Greco-Roman influences, while the body of the letter is more difficult to classify (O'Brien 1999:70). Greco-Roman letters normally have a three-part structure: opening, body and closing (Capes *et al.* 1997:56). Paul generally adhered to this convention in the writing of *Ephesians*.

In the opening, the author describes himself as "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God" (1:1). The recipients are "the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus" (1:1). The usual Greco-Roman greeting "χαίρειν" is replaced by

“χάρις” (1:2). Jewish letters began with the traditional Jewish greeting, “Peace to you” (Capes *et al.* 2007:58). Paul combined the two with the phrase “Grace to you and peace (εἰρήνη) from God”. This is a typical Pauline greeting (cf. Galatians 1:3, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 2 Corinthians 1:2, Romans 1:7). Instead of Paul giving his normal introductory thanksgiving, he gives an extended eulogy or *berakah* that resembles some Old Testament blessings and the prayer of praise as commonly recited in the Jewish synagogue (cf. Psalm 41:13, 72:18-19, 106:48) (Hoehner 2006:72, Keathley 1979:486). The ending of Ephesians is similar to Paul’s other letters, but Paul omits the customary health wish found in most Greco-Roman letters (O’Brien 1999:69).

The body of the letter is the most difficult to classify, as is the case for most Greco-Roman and New Testament letters (Hoehner 2006:72-73). Some scholars would even argue that Ephesians is not a letter at all.⁶² Nevertheless Ephesians bears a number of similarities to Paul’s other letters: (i) The opening and eulogy of praise to God (1:1-14); (ii) a thanksgiving paragraph with an intercessory prayer (1:15-19); (iii) Ephesians contains transitional formulae (e.g. 4:1); (iv) there is a considerable amount of instruction (1:3-3:21) and paraenesis (4:1-6:20) (Hoehner 2006:73); and (v) the letter makes significant use of the Old Testament, with only four explicit quotations but many Old Testament allusions, terms and concepts (O’Brien 1999:70). Of course, Paul’s use of the Old Testament demonstrates its profound influence on his thinking. The letter to the Ephesians seems very typical of Paul.

4.1.2 Ephesians and Rhetoric

In recent years, a considerable amount of scholarly attention has been focused on setting the Pauline epistles in the wider context of rhetoric (O’Brien 1999:73). O’Brien agrees with Stanley E. Porter’s conclusion when he states, “The Pauline writings are first and foremost letters, no matter what other kind of analysis [exists] into which they may fit” (O’Brien 1999:75). O’Brien and others argue that

⁶² For example, a theological tract clothed as a letter, a “wisdom discourse”, a baptism liturgy, or even the written equivalent of a sermon (Barth 1974:53-59).

Paul's letters, including Ephesians, should not be interpreted chiefly through the lens of ancient rhetorical rules. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, Paul himself denies the use of rhetoric and oratory as a strategy to persuade or influence his readers (e.g. 2 Corinthians 11:6, 1 Corinthians 2:1-2). Secondly, there is the basic problem of confusing the genre of speech with that of writing (O'Brien 1999:76-80, Hoehner 2006:77). O'Brien does concede that in the area of style (grammar, syntax and choice of words) there is some rhetorical influence, but notes that other devices like metaphors, citations and hyperbola were discussed in the ancient epistolary handbooks⁶³ (O'Brien 1999:81). Ephesians therefore would best be understood and interpreted by focussing on Paul's own method for argument within the letter itself. It seems that Ephesians is best understood when interpreted as an actual letter, just like any other Greco-Roman or Pauline letter, that was intended to be read out loud to the house churches in Ephesus and surrounds (Hoehner 2006:77, Yaghjian 2003:211).

4.1.3 Structure of Ephesians

The letter of Ephesians may be divided into two distinct but related halves. Chapters 1 to 3 comprise an extended eulogy and prayer - the framework for celebrating God's eternal, cosmic purposes in Christ (O'Brien 1999:66). Hoehner classifies this half of the letter as "instruction" (Hoehner 2006:73) and Lincoln classifies 2:1-3:21 as *narratio* – a report of the circumstances on which the audience was to base its thinking or actions (Lincoln 1990:xliv). The second half of the letter consists of paraenesis (4:1-6:20) and commendation (6:21-22). Lincoln classifies 4:1-6:9 as *exhortatio* and 6:10-24 as *peroratio* (1990:xliv). The second half begins with the words, Παράκαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς, "Therefore I exhort you" in 4:1. In this half, Paul used one of his favourite terms περιπατέω, "to walk" to describe Christian behaviour. The readers are to live and conduct themselves (Chapters 4-6) on the basis of what is true for them in Christ (Chapters 1-3). Many have therefore claimed that this letter can loosely be divided into "doctrine" (Chapters 1-3) and "ethics" (Chapters 4-6) (O'Brien 1999:66). Doctrine (what we believe) and ethics (how we live) are closely

⁶³ *Epistolary Types* (first century BC) and *Epistolary Styles* (400-500 AD) (O'Brien 1999:77).

related, or as Lincoln states, “thanksgiving and paraenesis are good companions” (Lincoln 1990:xxxix). Paul, of course, was well aware of this. Hoehner divides the book into “the calling of the Church” (1:1-3:21) and “the conduct of the Church” (4:1-6:24) (Hoehner 2006:vii).

It may be helpful to remain mindful of the overall structure of Ephesians, as one seeks to understand its content. Below is a proposed outline of the letter (Lincoln 1990:xlili):

1:1-2	Prescript/ Opening
1:3-6:20	Body
1:3-3:21	Extended Thanksgiving
4:1-6:20	Paraenesis
6:21-24	Postscript/ closing

4.1.4 Structure of Ephesians 1

The letter opens as a typical Greco-Roman letter would, providing details about its sender, the intended recipients and a greeting. After the greeting Paul generally begins his letters with an introductory thanksgiving to God for his work in the lives of the readers (cf. Romans 1:8, 1 Corinthians 1:4, Philippians 1:3). In Ephesians, however, Paul breaks from his traditional pattern by introducing a eulogy or *berakah* (1:3-14) before his customary thanksgiving to God (1:15-16) (Keathley 1979:485). Ephesians 1:3-14 is one long sentence and there is no consensus on its structure and form (Hoehner 2006:90). The eulogy may usefully be approached from a trinitarian perspective, with the emphasis first on God the Father (1:3-6), then on the Son (1:7-12), and finally on the Spirit (1:13-14) (Keathley 1979:486). Ralph P. Martin suggests a chronological approach (Keathley 1979:486): God’s redemption before the foundation of the world (1:4) that extends to a future realization (1:14). God’s activities are therefore being reviewed and praised in the eulogy. These two approaches seem to be complimentary, as the work of the triune God is both acknowledged and praised by Paul.

In seeking to exegete 1:15-23, it may be helpful to outline the text's structure and the author's progression of thought in chapter one:

1:1-2	Opening
1:1a	Sender
1:1b	Addressees
1:2	Greeting
1:3-14	Eulogy
1:15-23	Prayer
1:15-16a	Thanksgiving for readers
1:16b-19	Intercession for the readers
1:20-23	Praise to God for exalting Christ Jesus

4.1.5 Contents of Ephesians 1

The eulogy in chapter one forms the foundation for the subsequent prayer and the eulogy has been carefully constructed. The word "bless" occurs three times in 1:3.⁶⁴ God is to be praised or "blessed" because of the fact that he has already blessed the recipients with every spiritual blessing (Keathley 1979:487). The eulogy emphasises God's initiative in providing these blessings with the use of words like "chose" (v4), "destined" (v5), "purpose" (v11) and "will" (v5) (cf. Keathley 1979:488). Paul affirms that the Ephesian believers' salvation is the result of a divine plan. Far from being an insignificant sect in a polytheistic world, the Ephesian believers are, according to Paul, part of the divine purpose of God. The reason God had purposed these blessings, according to Paul, is not because he has been manipulated by magical incantations, but because of his "love" (1:4), "grace" (1:7), "good pleasure" (1:9) and "for the praise of his glory" (1:12).

Paul stressed that this purpose of God is to be found "in" and "through" Christ (1:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13). That which God purposed for humanity from before the creation of the world is brought about by God's action and will in Christ

⁶⁴ "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

(Keathley 1979:488). It is in and through Christ that the believers have every spiritual blessing, that is, they have been chosen (1:4), destined to sonship (1:5), redeemed and forgiven (1:7) and have received the mystery of God's will to unite the cosmos, including Jews and Gentiles, under Christ (1:9-10) (O'Brien 1999:95-96). All this occurred when the readers heard and believed the gospel (1:13) and put their faith in the Lord Jesus (1:15). The redemption and forgiveness (1:7) the believers have is particularly through Christ's death.⁶⁵ Keathley notes that Paul shows clearly how, contrary to pagan worship, which seeks to coerce the deities into some specific action, Christian worship is always a grateful response to God for what he has already done in giving believers every spiritual blessing in Christ (Keathley 1989:487). Worship, according to Paul and identified by Keathley, is therefore not a means to an end, but rather an end in itself (Keathley 1979:487).

The spiritual blessings in Christ are enjoyed, according to the author, in the ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις (v3). Lincoln believes that the term "in the heavenlies" (or "in the heavenly realms") comes from the author's Old Testament and Jewish concept of heaven as the dwelling place of God and the invisible created spiritual order (Lincoln 1981:140-141). The term probably would also be understandable within the Greco-Roman paradigm, as the hostile spirits and demons were thought to operate "in the heavens" (Lincoln 1981:140, Arnold 1989:60, 78). O'Brien adds that the phrase ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις is in line with the Jewish two-age structure and is seen from the perspective of the age to come, which is now inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Jesus (O'Brien 1999:97). According to Paul, both the "heavenly realms" and the present age are in co-existence until the consummation of all things in Christ (1:10, cf. 1:21). Therefore, the hostile "powers" really are currently in operation "in the heavenly realms" (3:10, 6:12). Lincoln helpfully sums up his view when he writes, "The blessings can be said to be in the heavenly realms, yet they are not viewed as treasure stored up for future appropriation, but as benefits belonging to [the] believers now" (Lincoln

⁶⁵ O'Brien writes that the expression "through his blood" signifies that Christ's violent death on the cross as a sacrifice is the means by which our deliverance has been won (O'Brien 1999:106).

1990:21). The spiritual blessings of the age to come are thus a present reality. Paul mentions τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς in 1:10 to emphasize that not even the hostile “powers” that were thought to dwell in the “heavenly realms” can thwart God’s purpose to unite the whole cosmos in Christ (Lincoln 1981:144).

In 1:13 Paul specifically addressed the Gentile believers (Keathley 1979:490, O’Brien 1999:118).⁶⁶ According to Paul, the Gentile believers were also sealed with the Holy Spirit, just as the Jewish believers were when they believed. For Paul, believing and being sealed were two sides of the same coin and therefore because the readers were believers,⁶⁷ they were recipients of the Holy Spirit (Thomas 2001:162, Keathley 1979:490). Sealing implies ownership and protection⁶⁸ (O’Brien 1999:120). It seems likely that many of the believers may have reverted to magic for protection from the “powers” that dominated Ephesian religious life (Arnold 1989:38). Magic, according to the author, was now no longer necessary as the believers had been sealed with the Holy Spirit, indicating that the believers belonged to the all-powerful God and could therefore expect his protection at all times (Thomas 2001:166). The Holy Spirit is also the “down payment” on the believers’ future endowment (1:14). Paul maintains here that the believers have been given an advance on their inheritance against the day of full payment (Keathley 1979:490).

The recipients have been reminded in 1:4-14⁶⁹ that they have every spiritual blessing and that the scope of God’s salvation in Jesus is cosmic and comprehensive. The appropriate response for them, according to Paul, is to

⁶⁶ “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation...” (Ephesians 1:13).

⁶⁷ Although some see this as a reference to the believer’s water baptism and subsequent sealing of the Holy Spirit. There seems however to be no hint of baptism in the context.

⁶⁸ Rodney Thomas has done an interesting study entitled, “*The seal of the Spirit and the religious climate of Ephesus*” where he observes that in a society where amulets and talismans were often used for protecting one from evil, the “seal” of the Holy Spirit would have been understood as a potent symbol of the Holy Spirit himself who offers protection from all forms of magical influence” (Thomas 2001:166).

⁶⁹ It may have been more logical for Paul to expound on the facts of their salvation (2:1-10) before expressing the benefits of their salvation (1:4-14). We may speculate as to why Paul did not begin his letter with 2:1-10 and follow it with 1:4-14. One reason may be that the issue challenging the Ephesian Christians was not the *reality* of their salvation, but the *comprehensiveness* of their salvation to, among other things, protect them from evil.

bless God (1:3). The eulogy in 1:3-14, as briefly described above, sets the stage for Paul's prayer in 1:15-23 (Keathley 1979:491, O'Brien 1999:124). Paul's prayer, like the eulogy, comprises one long sentence. Several ideas contained in the eulogy are referred to in Paul's prayer. Perhaps it would be closer to Paul's intention to say that the things Paul prays for are strongly reminiscent of the realities he has praised God for in the preceding eulogy (Keathley 1979:491). The "spirit of wisdom" (1:17) uses the same word "wisdom" as in 1:8. "Revelation" (1:17), the word for the self-disclosure of God (Keathley 1979:491), is that which Paul has said God had done when "he made known to us the mystery of his will" (1:9). "Hope" in 1:18 calls to mind "we who were the first to hope in Christ" (1:12). "Called" (1:18) and "chosen" (1:4) are similar ideas. The "inheritance" of 1:18 is a repetition of the word and thought of 1:14 which reads, "our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession" (Keathley 1979:491). The logical conclusion is that Paul did not pray for new blessings, but for a renewed understanding, appreciation, appropriation and continuation of every spiritual blessing that the believers already had (cf. Keathley 1979:491).

In the eulogy Paul praised God for the great salvation he had accomplished, and in the prayer of 1:15-23 he prays that the letter's recipients may understand and appreciate just how great this salvation is (Lincoln 1981:144). O'Brien helpfully writes that the intercession was for the realization of the blessings of the eulogy in the lives of the readers (O'Brien 1999:125). The Father is addressed in the intercession (1:17), for he is at work on behalf of his people. Jesus is the focus of God's activity (1:20-23). The Spirit is the agent "who interprets God's activities and enables believers to appropriate what has been accomplished for them" (Lincoln 1990:81). Paul's prayer encompassed the past, present and future. In the past God had raised and exalted Christ (1:20), in the present God's many benefits become available to those who believe (1:17-19) and in the future there is a glorious inheritance awaiting the believers (1:18) (O'Brien 1999:126).

4.2 Exegesis of Ephesians 1:15-23

After an overview of the structure and general contents of chapter one, we may now move more confidently to a closer exegesis of Ephesians 1:15-23. The prayer of 1:15-23 is the second of eight long sentences in this epistle (Hoehner 2006:247, Barth 1974a:160) and therefore the prayer will be treated as a unit in the exegesis below.

4.2.1 1:15-16a Thanksgiving for the Readers

Text: (15) Διὰ τοῦτο καὶ γὰρ, ἀκούσας τὴν καθ' ὑμᾶς πίστιν ἐν τῷ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην τὴν εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους, (16) οὐ παύομαι εὐχαριστῶν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν

Translation: (15) For this reason I also having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and the love towards all the saints, (16) I never cease giving thanks for you.

Paul commenced his prayer by thanking God for his readers. In Ephesus it was not unusual for families to offer public thanks to Artemis, such as dedications inscribed in stone (Horsley 1992:143-144). In 1:15-23 Paul wanted to publically thank his God. The reason (διὰ τοῦτο) Paul thanked God refers back to 1:3-14, especially 1:13-14 (Hoehner 2006:248), where the eulogy was applied to Gentile believers⁷⁰ who were now in Christ and on an equal footing with Jewish believers (O' Brien 1999:124-125). Paul had good reason to thank God for his work in the believers' lives, especially because the Ephesians had heard and believed the gospel and were now sealed with the Holy Spirit. The phrase ἀκούσας τὴν καθ' ὑμᾶς πίστιν explains why Paul was giving thanks and indicates that the author received news of the recipients' faith in the Lord Jesus. Barth, however,

⁷⁰ Jody Barnard thinks, perhaps correctly, that the second person plural in the letter refers to both Gentile and Jewish Christians as the author felt it was necessary to qualify "you" with "Gentiles" in 2:11 and 3:1, indicating a more inclusive referent in the absence of the qualification (Barnard 2009:169).

translates this phrase as “after hearing of the faithfulness among you” (Barth 1974a:146). The brevity of this thanksgiving report may give credence to the theory that this was a circular letter intended to various home churches (O’Brien 1999:125). It should be remembered that Paul had not been in Ephesus for a few years and there were most likely many new converts whom he did not know personally. The recipients’ faith was ἐν τῷ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ. Their faith was originally in Artemis, but now it was in the Lord Jesus (Hoehner 2006:249).

The second thing Paul had heard about and so gave thanks for is τὴν ἀγάπην τὴν εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους. The term τοὺς ἁγίους can be translated as “the holy ones” or “the saints” (O’Brien 1999:87). Paul uses this term to refer to believers. Here in 1:15, the term refers to all (πάντας) the believers in the local church, both Jew and Gentile (Hoehner 2006:250). The phrase οὐ παύομαι εὐχαριστῶν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν indicates that Paul not only gave thanks to God for having given the Ephesian believers every spiritual blessing and for having sealed them with the Holy Spirit when they heard and believed, but he also gave continual thanks for their faith in Jesus (as opposed to Artemis) and their resultant love for their fellow believers. Love and faith very often occur together in Paul’s writings (cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:3, Galatians 5:5-6). οὐ παύομαι simply means that Paul did not forget the believers at his regular prayer times or in his “constant thanksgiving” (Hoehner 2006:250, O’Brien 1999:128).

4.2.2 1:16b-19 Intercession for the Readers

Text: (16b) μνησίαν ὑμῶν ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου, (17) ἵνα ὁ θεὸς τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ πατὴρ τῆς δόξης, δώῃ ὑμῖν πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως ἐν ἐπιγνώσει αὐτοῦ, (18) πεφωτισμένους τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς καρδίας [ὑμῶν] εἰς τὸ εἰδέναι ὑμᾶς τίς ἐστὶν ἡ ἐλπίς τῆς κλήσεως αὐτοῦ, τίς ὁ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης τῆς κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις, (19) καὶ τί τὸ ὑπερβάλλον μέγεθος τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ εἰς ἡμᾶς τοὺς πιστεύοντας κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ

Translation: (16b) making mention of you in my prayers (17) in order that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory, may give you [the] Spirit of wisdom and revelation in order to know him [better], (18) having had the eyes of your heart enlightened in order that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints, (19) and what is the exceeding greatness of his power in us who believe according to the working of his mighty strength

The phrase *μνείαν ὑμῶν ποιούμενος ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου* (“making mention of you in my prayers”) in 1:16 indicates that Paul not only gave thanks but also interceded on behalf of the believers in Ephesus by mentioning the believers in his prayers. It is very likely that Paul was aware of the believers’ difficulties and challenges because of their newfound “faith in the Lord Jesus Christ” in the midst of the polytheistic and magical climate of western Asia Minor and therefore he interceded on their behalf to the one true God.

What did Paul specifically ask for? The request is found in 1:17. Paul requested that God would give the readers the “Spirit of wisdom and revelation” so that they may know God better or more intimately (*ἐν ἐπιγνώσει αὐτοῦ*).

Paul emphasised exactly who the God is to which he prayed. He is the *ὁ θεὸς τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* (1:17). The Arians⁷¹ misunderstood this phrase to mean that Christ was the created Son of God, rather than understanding the phrase as referring to submission within the trinity. The three persons within the trinity have traditionally been seen to have different roles and therefore the three persons relate to each other in different ways. The difference in roles and relationship in no way implies inferiority or superiority (Hoehner 2006:255). The title “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ” is best understood to bring to mind the eulogy in 1:3-14, where God is addressed as “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” who has given the believers every spiritual blessing. The prayer

⁷¹ That is, the followers of Arius (250-336 AD), who viewed the Son as a being created by the will and power of God, and thus also denied the concept of a triune God (Keith 1988:41).

following this eulogy was for the realization, appropriation and full comprehension of these blessings. Ὁ πατήρ τῆς δόξης in 1:17 is a unique phrase, but also has its roots in the Old Testament and Jewish writings (O'Brien 1999:131). God was often referred to as "the God/ King/ Lord of Glory" (cf. Psalm 29:3, Psalm 24:7, 1 Enoch 22:14). "Glory" indicates the splendour, radiance and power of God; it is the summation of all of God's attributes (Hoehner 2006:255). The genitive can either be an adjectival genitive ("the glorious Father") or a genitive of origin, which would denote God as the source of all glory ("the Father of glory"). Both options seem to be implied by Paul here, and this is the God to whom Paul prayed. Arnold suggests that God as Father brings to mind the concept of God as Creator and source of life (cf. Ephesians 3:14) (Arnold 1989:96). Knowing that Paul's God and indeed their God was the glorious Creator and the source of all glory would have reassured the recipients that God is indeed capable of fulfilling the requests that are directed towards him.

In the phrase δώη ὑμῖν πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως in 1:17, Paul requested "wisdom" and "revelation" for the believers. The πνεῦμα here probably refers to the Holy Spirit, rather than the human spirit/ attitude/ disposition, as ἀποκαλύψις is not the understanding of hidden things, but the disclosure of them [by God]⁷² (Hoehner 2006:257). Lincoln also argues that in this letter "revelation" is always by God's Spirit, and not a human being's spirit (cf. Ephesians 3:3, 3:5) (Lincoln 1990:57). Barth views πνεῦμα as a reference to God's Spirit who creates in believers a new *human* spirit or disposition (Barth 1974a:148). "Wisdom" may be described as an understanding of God's will and "revelation" as some mystery of God that is unveiled by God. Barth however maintains that it is impossible to distinguish between God's wisdom and man's wisdom and the phrase could be rendered "that God may inspire you with wisdom and revelation" (Barth 1974a:162). Why did Paul want his readers to have the Spirit of wisdom and revelation?

⁷² One understands the "spirit (disposition) of wisdom", but the "spirit of revelation" seems to be a difficult concept.

The answer may be found in 1:17. Ἐν ἐπιγνώσει αὐτοῦ in 1:17 directly translates as “in the knowledge of him”. Lightfoot saw the prepositional prefix ἐπι- as intensifying γνώσις, to indicate a larger and more thorough knowledge (Hoehner 2006:258). Lincoln sees the two Greek words as synonymous (Lincoln 1990:58). Paul’s view of “knowledge” here is probably largely determined by the Old Testament where the idea of “knowing God” implied a close personal relationship with him because he had made himself known (O’Brien 1999:132). To know God, in this context, is to know God intimately. Paul’s ultimate goal in this intercession was for believers to know the God of the Lord Jesus Christ - the source of all glory - more intimately. Paul therefore prayed for the Holy Spirit to give the Ephesian believers more insight and revelation so that they might know God better, including his purposes and, as we shall see, his power. In the mystery religions of the Greco-Roman world, only a select circle of initiates could unlock the “mysteries” and have access to “revelation”. For Paul, the “mystery” and “revelation” had been made known to all believers (Keathley 1979:489, Hoehner 2006:259).

The phrase πεφωτισμένους τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς καρδίας [ύμῶν] (“having had the eyes of your heart enlightened”) in 1:18 has been translated in various ways. The issue causing this is the phrase’s syntactical connection to the rest of the sentence (Hoehner 2006:261). The preferred option is to see the participle πεφωτισμένους as causal and so to emphasize its passive voice, so the phrase would be translated as: “that God may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to know him, having had the eyes of your heart enlightened”. Paul could therefore pray for wisdom and revelation because the believers in Ephesus had already had their understandings enlightened when they heard and believed the gospel (1:13). Light and darkness are often-used concepts in the Pauline literature, even in this letter (cf. Ephesians 3:9, 4:18, 5:8). The other major alternative translation is to view πεφωτισμένους τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς as referring back to δῶη and therefore as part of the request. The text would then read, “that God may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in order to know him [and]

that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened” as the NIV similarly renders. Barth agrees with the validity of this translation and contends that πεφωτισμένους should be interpreted as active, as the enlightening work of the Spirit is not “exhausted or perfected in one moment only” (Barth 1974a:150). The former translation seems to make better sense of the grammar (Hoehner 2006:261). Τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς καρδίας (“the eyes of your heart”) is an Old Testament expression (cf. Psalm 13:3, 19:8) denoting “spiritual insight” (O’Brien 1999:133) or enlightenment of “thought and understanding” (Hoehner 2006:261). O’Brien notes that the word “enlightened” was also used in the mystery religions as a technical term for the rite of initiation (O’Brien 1999:134). In PGM IV.2721-2725 (fourth century AD) Artemis is addressed as “bringer of light” and in PGM IV.2789 Artemis/Selene is extolled as the “bringer of light to mortals” (cf. 3.3 above and figure 6 below). It may be that Paul is advocating here that God’s “enlightenment” (1:18) is the true enlightenment, as opposed to other religious enlightenments found in western Asia Minor, because it enables the believer to know the true God, *the* Father of glory.



Figure 6: Silver denarius, 42 BC, showing Artemis/ Diana as light-bringer and huntress

(A silver denarius showing Diana. 2009. Ancient coins. Available at: http://www.forumancientcoins.com/moonmoth/reverse_diana.html. Accessed on: 26 October 2009.)

Knowing God more intimately would mean knowing at least three things about God and his salvation. These are expounded by Paul in 1:18b-23. These three truths would have been of particular relevance to the Ephesian believers.

What was the content or purpose of Paul's prayer for the "spirit of wisdom and revelation in order to know [God] better", bearing in mind the religious context of western Asia Minor? εἰς τὸ (1:18) with the infinitive εἰδέναι ὑμᾶς is predominately used by Paul to indicate purpose (Hoehner 2006:263). Three reasons or purposes are provided by Paul in 1:18-23, each clause introduced by the word τίς, "what". Paul wanted his readers to grow in their knowledge of God for three reasons:

(18b)... τίς ἐστὶν ἡ ἐλπίς τῆς κλήσεως αὐτοῦ

(18c)... τίς ὁ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης τῆς κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις,

(19)... τί τὸ ὑπερβάλλον μέγεθος τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ εἰς ἡμᾶς τοὺς πιστεύοντας

Translated as:

(18b)...what is the hope of his calling

(v18c)...what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints

(19)...what is the exceeding greatness of his power in us who believe

4.2.2.a Reason One: The hope of his calling (1:18b)

εἰς τὸ εἰδέναι ὑμᾶς τίς ἐστὶν ἡ ἐλπίς τῆς κλήσεως αὐτοῦ

The first concept Paul wanted his readers to understand was "what the hope is of his [God's] calling" was, perhaps better translated as, "the hope to which he has called you" (taking the genitive αὐτοῦ that follows "κλήσεως" as a genitive of source) (O'Brien 1999:134). The noun "calling" was used in classical Greek to mean a "summons" to court or an "invitation" to a feast (Hoehner 2006:265). In the context of Paul's message, it referred to the believers' call of God to salvation, since they were chosen by God before the creation of the world (1:4) to be adopted into his family (1:5). The ἐλπίς was not the believers' subjective hope as in 1:12, but rather the objective content of that hope - that which was hoped for. This "hope" is interwoven with the notion of bringing "all things in heaven and on earth together under Christ" (1:10) in the future. Nevertheless, the emphasis is on the past. The Ephesian believers had been summoned by

God himself in the past to a certain hope in the future. The believers' "calling" by God is in direct contrast to the Ephesian and indeed Greco-Roman belief that one's fate was at the whim of Artemis or some other pagan deity or "power" (Arnold 1989:129). God himself had summoned the recipients and secured their future.

4.2.2.b Reason Two: The wealth of his glorious inheritance (1:18c)

τίς ὁ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης τῆς κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις

The second concept in Paul's request built upon the idea presented in the first. The word πλοῦτος has the idea of "opulence, riches or wealth" (Perschbacher 1990:333). κληρονομία may be translated as "possession, inheritance or property" (Perschbacher 1990:241). Some scholars think that the "inheritance" in 1:18 refers to the inheritance that God will give to the believers (Barth 1974a:151). The "inheritance" would then be the content of "the hope" of the previous clause and a further expounding of the "inheritance" in 1:14. The text however claims that the "inheritance" is τῆς κληρονομίας αὐτοῦ (*God's inheritance*). This clause, introduced by τίς, probably means that God's inheritance, namely his own people (ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις), would be fully his when all things are brought together in Christ. In the Old Testament God's inheritance was frequently used as a synonym for his people (cf. Deuteronomy 4:20, 2 Samuel 21:3, Psalm 28:9, Isaiah 19:25) (Lincoln 1990:59). The believers themselves are God's inheritance. Paul thus emphasizes the believers' inherent worth to God and the extraordinary value God has placed on them (O'Brien 1999:136). Paul not only wanted his readers to know the hope to which they had been called, but also how his readers in the then-present were highly prized by God, who viewed them as his own κληρονομία. Not only did the believers have an inheritance (1:11), but God also had an inheritance (Hoehner 2006:267). It may be that Paul was implying and inferring that God would protect his valuable inheritance against any forces or hostile "powers" that might seek to

oppose or prevent his inheritance from being fully realized “when the times will have reached their fulfilment” (1:10).

4.2.2.c Reason Three: The exceeding greatness of God’s power in believers (1:19)

καὶ τί τὸ ὑπερβάλλον μέγεθος τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ εἰς ἡμᾶς τοὺς πιστεύοντας κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ

The third purpose or reason for Paul’s request was that the Ephesian believers might be given a renewed insight into the supernatural power of God that was at work in them (Arnold 1989:72). The believers needed to know how to respond to and view the former gods and goddesses they had venerated, not forgetting the various underworld spirits and demons they had feared (Arnold 1992a:150). Most scholars agree that the author in 1:19 is trying to convey the great magnitude of the Divine Power by exhausting the resources of the Greek language, piling up the synonyms for power (Lincoln 1990:60, O’Brien 1999:137, Barth 1974a:152). The different synonyms (μέγεθος, δύναμις, κράτος, ἰσχύς) are used to emphasize each word’s similarities, and not the differences (Lincoln 1990:60). Both the words ὑπερβάλλω and μέγεθος appear in the magical papyri (Arnold 1989:73). The incantation in PGM XII.284 (fourth century AD), which contains a spell to make a ring for success, favour and victory, begins with:

“Greatest God, who exceeds (ὑπερβάλλεις) all power (τὴν πᾶσαν δυνάμιν), I call on you”

PGM II.344 (fourth century) is an invocation to Apollo, Artemis’ brother, and reads:

“I adjure your power which is greatest over all”

The term δύναμις also occurs about a hundred times in the magical papyri (Arnold 1989:73). And so it is clear that the author of Ephesians was probably deliberately using words and terms that the readers would understand as

denoting supernatural power and was then attributing this power to the God of Jesus Christ (1:3) to emphasize the supremacy of the power of ὁ θεὸς τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (1:17). The author wanted to point out the “absolutely unique and superior power exerted by God in the resurrection of Christ (Barth 1974a:152).

We find echoes of cultural intertexture here (Robbins 1996:40), as we note that invocations and spells in the Greco-Roman world consistently sought the gods’ power to intervene in human affairs in some way. In 1:19 the power of God is described as supreme and as the same power that was available to and indeed εἰς the ones who exercised faith in this God (εἰς ἡμᾶς τοὺς πιστεύοντας) (Arnold 1989:73). PGM III.494-611 (fourth century AD) contains a spell to establish a relationship with Helios. In lines 494-501 it reads:

“Come to me...air-transversing, great god. Hear me in every ritual which [I perform], and grant all the [petitions] of my prayer completely, because I know your signs, [symbols and] forms, who you are each hour and what your name is.”

In contrast, the power of Paul’s God, according to 1:19, is received by faith; not by recipe, chanting or magical signs. This supreme power of God is available to those “who believe” or the “believing ones”, not the “chanting-ones” or the “ones who know the signs or formulae”.

The term ἐνέργεια (1:19) is always used to describe supernatural power in Paul’s letters (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 2:11, Philippians 3:21, Colossians 1:29, 2:12, Ephesians 1:19, 3:7, 4:16). κράτος (1:19) can be translated as “strength, might, force or power” (Perschbacher 1990:247) and ἰσχύς (1:19) as “strength, might, power or ability” (Perschbacher 1990:211). Hoehner reiterates that the lexical range of all the power words in 1:19 overlap to enforce the idea that God’s abundant and all-surpassing power is in and available to the believers (Hoehner 2006:271). In comparison to Artemis and the other well-established Greco-

Roman gods and “powers”, this perspective on the power of God was not necessarily self-evident. Artemis presided in a world-renowned temple; Jesus was a wandering preacher who was executed by Rome. Paul, Jesus’ follower, was in a Roman prison (cf. Ephesians 4:1, 6:20). The power of God was not self-evident and so Paul reminded his readers of this powerful truth.

The three purposes of Paul’s prayer for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation was firstly that the believers might comprehend the hope to which God himself had called them in the past; then that the inestimable value they were to God as his inheritance would be fully realized in the future; and finally, that the all-exceeding, all-surpassing, supernatural power of God that was in them and for them in the present time as believers would be known to them.

4.2.3 1:20-23 Praise to God for Enthroning Jesus

Text: (20) ἣν ἐνήργησεν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐγείρας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν, καὶ καθίσας ἐν δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις (21) ὑπεράνω πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ κυριότητος καὶ παντὸς ὀνόματος ὀνομαζομένου οὐ μόνον ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι: (22) καὶ πάντα ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ, καὶ αὐτὸν ἔδωκεν κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, (23) ἣτις ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ, τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου.

Translation: (20) which he exercised in Christ by raising him out of the dead and by seating him at his right hand in the heavenly realms (21) far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and any name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come; (22) and he subjected everything under his feet, and he gave him as head over everything to the church, (23) which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all things in every respect.

The exceeding greatness of God's power that was at work in the believers was manifested or demonstrated in three ways, according to the author:

(1:20)... ἐνήργησεν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ

(a) ...ἐγείρας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν

(b) ...καθίσας ἐν δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ

(1:22a) ...καὶ πάντα ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ

(1:22b)... καὶ αὐτὸν ἔδωκεν κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ

4.2.3.a God's power was demonstrated by raising and enthroning Jesus (1:20-21)

(20) ἦν ἐνήργησεν ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐγείρας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν, καὶ καθίσας ἐν δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις (21) ὑπεράνω πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ κυριότητος καὶ παντὸς ὀνόματος ὀνομαζομένου οὐ μόνον ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι:

Ἐγείρας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν (plural) in 1:20 literally means that God's power was ἐνήργησεν ("exercised") by raising Jesus *out of* the dead. Christ Jesus was raised⁷³ out of all those who had died and who remain buried in the earth (Hoehner 2006:274). This demonstration of the power of God may have been especially significant to the Greco-Roman believers. PGM 1.267-347 contains an invocation to Apollos, Artemis' brother and the son of Zeus. Herein, he, the "blessed one", is described as:

"you who rule heaven and earth and Chaos and Hades" (lines 315-316)

Christ is presented by Paul as more powerful than Apollos, who allegedly rules over Hades. Perhaps even more significantly, the goddess Hekate Ereschigal, who is identified with Artemis, is seemingly named the "Lady of Tartaros" in PGM

⁷³ Barth provides compelling reasons as to why the resurrection should be viewed as a historical event without parallel, as opposed to a mythical, subjective or existential "resurrection" (Barth 1974:164-170).

LXX.5-11 (third or fourth century AD). In classical Greek mythology Tartaros is a deep, gloomy place or an abyss used as a dungeon of torment or suffering for souls after death, that resides beneath the underworld. God's power, according to Paul, was strong enough to raise Christ Jesus out of the place of the dead, over which other "powers" allegedly ruled. First-century people were terrified of Hades/Tartaros. In PGM II.345 (referred to above) Apollos is able to "destroy even in Hades". PGM 1.149-196 appears a spell to Selene/Artemis for acquiring an assistant (a spiritual guide). Lines 178-181 contain the following:

"When you are dead, he will wrap up your body as befits a god, but he will take your spirit and carry it into the air with him. For no aerial spirit which is joined to a mighty assistant will go into Hades, for to him all things are subject."

The mighty assistant would guarantee that after death one's "spirit" was not taken [down] into Hades. The power of God as demonstrated by raising Christ Jesus out of the dead was thus highly significant in this Greco-Roman thought world where Hades was feared.

But God's power was not only seen in raising Jesus out of the dead but also, according to the author, by καθίσας ἐν δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις⁷⁴ (that is, "by seating him at his right hand in the heavenly realm") in 1:20. The writers of the New Testament often allude to and quote Psalm 110:1, which reads:

"The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" (Psalm 110:1 NIV)

Psalm 110 is commonly employed by the New Testament writers to interpret God's enthronement of Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 2:34-35, Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 1:3). This is clearly also the case in Paul's realigned view of Jesus. To sit at the right hand of God is a "symbol of divine power" (Hoehner 2006:275) and a position of "special honour and privilege and power" (O'Brien 1999:141). Christ

⁷⁴ Hoehner considers the phrase ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις as inauthentic (Hoehner 2006:275). Most scholars however accept its presence.

Jesus was raised, but unlike the tradition of Lazarus, Jesus would not die again, indeed “he now possesses the full authority of the Father” (O’Brien 1999:141). Christ is, according to the author, in the position of supreme power over the universe. Although the believers are said to be “seated with [Christ] in the heavenly realms” according to 2:6, significantly there is no mention of “at his right hand” (O’Brien 1999:141). The “powers” in 1:21, as has been maintained in this thesis, should be seen as enemies in rebellion towards God’s Messiah, as consistent with the allusion to Psalm 110:1. According to the Greco-Roman thought-world, it was also in the “heavenly realms” or in the “kingdom of the air” that the hostile “powers” operated (cf. Ephesians 2:2, PGM IV.569) (Arnold 1989:60, 78). It is significant that it is ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις (1:20) where Jesus is said to be enthroned. Not only was Jesus raised and put in the supreme position of power but, according to Paul, that same power was at work in and for the believers in Ephesus and surrounds.

ὑπεράνω in 1:21 seems best translated as “far above” (Perschbacher 1990:418). Not only is Christ Jesus enthroned ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις, he is enthroned ὑπεράνω the other “powers”. The terms employed to denote the “powers” in 1:21 are introduced by the term πάσης. πᾶς can be translated as “all” or “every” (Perschbacher 1990:315). Hoehner opts for the latter as πάσης may be seen as an anarthrous singular and thus refers to “every kind of” power that exists (Hoehner 2006:276). The terms ἀρχή, ἐξουσία, δύναμις, κυριότης and ὄνομα have been discussed in 3.5 above. In 3.1.4.c above we also noted that in the Intertestamental literature ἄρχων referred to supernatural evil spirits. We concluded that these terms most likely referred to personal, spiritual beings that Paul viewed as opposed to God and that these spiritual beings may or may not choose to work through human agents or agencies. The list of abstract terms in 1:21 indicate that regardless of the title or designation, these “powers” are below Christ Jesus on the power scale (Hoehner 2006:281). As shown in chapter two, Artemis was considered to be a supremely powerful deity, even “πρωτοθρονία” (Mussies 1999:95). Paul here clarifies the position of Christ Jesus in relation to

Artemis or any other “power” in the Greco-Roman religious world, by virtue of his resurrection and enthronement. The cultural echoes in this text would be hard to miss.

In the magical papyri, the “calling” or “naming” of supernatural “powers” (such as those listed in 1:21) is of extreme importance. We have already referred to the spell of invocation that was used in an attempt to establish a relationship with Helios in PGM III.496-611. In line 500-501 of the magical papyri, the suppliant was to say:

“I know...what your name is”.

Already in 1974, Markus Barth observed that in pagan cults and magic formulae the mention of a superior power’s name allegedly caused the deity or demon to listen, to help, or to refrain from doing harm (Barth 1974a:155). Bearing in mind these magical and religious beliefs, practices and traditions, the Ephesian author in 1:21 claims that Jesus is ὑπεράνω... παντὸς ὀνόματος ὀνομαζομένου (“far above...any name that is *named*”). Οὐ μόνον ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι (“not only in this age but also in the one to come”) was the common Jewish apocalyptic outlook on the division of time and no doubt demonstrates Paul’s Old Testament background and Jewish influences (Lincoln 1981:145). Paul understood himself to be living in the overlap of the ages. Paul maintained that the supremacy of Christ Jesus over the hostile “powers” included this age and the age to come, when the kingdom of God will, according to Paul, be established in all its fullness. The first demonstration of God’s power was therefore, according to the author, the raising and enthroning of Jesus.

4.2.3.b God’s power was demonstrated by subjecting everything under Jesus’ feet (1:22a)

(22a) καὶ πάντα ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ

The supremacy of Christ Jesus and the all-exceeding power of God is further emphasized in 1:22a by the author’s allusion to Psalm 8:6, which reads:

“You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet” (Psalm 8:6 NIV)

Jesus Christ, now in the designated place of authority, is able to exercise that authority, as “all things” are under his feet (O’Brien 1999:145). First-century cultural echoes are also evident here. As referred to in 3.3 above, in PGM 1.149ff we find a spell to Selene [Artemis] for her to send an “assistant” or a “mighty angel” for protection. The “assistant”, according to pagan belief, is able to provide protection because “to him *all things* are subject” (line 181).

Let us turn our attention to another Psalm that deals with the issue of authority. Psalm 8:6 refers to human beings who were created as God’s vice-regents, to exercise rule over the creation (cf. Genesis 1:26-28) (Hoehner 2006:282). “πάντα” in 1:22 corresponds to the “everything” in Psalm 8:6. In the latter Psalm, “everything” refers to the natural (earthly) created order (cf. Psalm 8:7-8). Then, the “πάντα” in 1:22 seems to have the same cosmic scope as the τὰ πάντα in 1:10 and 23, which implies that the whole universe, heaven and earth, cosmic powers and human beings, are subordinate to the enthroned Christ (Lincoln 1990:66). Similarly in Ephesians, Christ Jesus is seen by Paul as achieving the original cultural mandate given to human beings by the ἐνέργειαν τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος (“the working of his [God’s] mighty strength”, 1:19), and even going beyond this mandate. The term ὑποτάσσω may be rendered as “to place under” or “to subordinate” (Perschbacher 1990:423). The whole cosmos and everything in it, including the “powers” venerated and feared by the citizens of western Asia Minor, is, according to Paul, under the authority of Christ by the power of God. Christ Jesus is portrayed as the κοσμοκράτωρ (cf. 3.3 above), as he is not among the competing “rulers of this world”, but above them all (cf. 1:21) (Barth 1974a:156).

Some scholars accuse the author of having an (over-) realized eschatology at this point as Paul allegedly viewed the destruction of the powers as

accomplished at Christ's enthronement, as opposed to a future destruction at Christ's parousia (Hoehner 2006:284). This may be overstating Paul's "realized/ now"" eschatology, at the expense of his "unrealized/ not yet" eschatology, as the author elsewhere in the letter refers to the "powers" as still at work in the world (cf. Ephesians 3:10, 6:12). According to Paul, all things, including the hostile "powers", were indeed made subject to Christ but, because the believers still lived in the overlap of the ages, this fact was not obvious to them. Paul argues that at the full inauguration of the age to come, at the bringing of "all things in heaven and on earth together under one head" (1:10), when the "times will have reached their fulfilment" (1:10), Jesus Christ's supremacy over all the "powers" would be made very evident (cf. Hoehner 2006:284). The author and the believers lived in the tension between the "now" and the "not yet". Therefore the second demonstration of God's power was in the subjecting of everything, particularly the "powers", under Christ Jesus.

4.2.3.c God's power was demonstrated by giving Jesus as head of the church (1:22b-23)

(22b) καὶ αὐτὸν ἔδωκεν κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, (23) ἣτις ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ, τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πασὶν πληρουμένου.

The third way in which the power of God is demonstrated, according to the author, was by God giving Jesus Christ to be head of the church. Paul demonstrates how his high Christology has influenced his ecclesiology (Arnold 1989:79). 1:22b-23 expands on the εἰς ἡμᾶς τοὺς πιστεύοντας ("in us who believe") in 1:19. Arnold suggests that the term κεφαλὴ in 1:22 has its background in the LXX where it is translated as "superior", "ruler" or "leader" (Arnold 1989:79). In 1:23 the head is mentioned in relation to the "body". The question of the origin of the concept of the head/body metaphor has been the subject of much scholarly debate. Many scholars, including Ernst Käseman, have understood the concept of the σῶμα to be derived from the Gnostic redeemer myth and so argue that it should be identified with the universe or

cosmos (Hoehner 2006:292, Arnold 1989:79). Others have seen the *σῶμα* concept as derived from the notion of corporate personality in the Old Testament (O'Brien 1999:147).

The concept may have also been derived from Paul's conversion experience on the road to Damascus, where the divine Christ identified himself with his followers using the words, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (cf. Acts 9:4, 22:7, 26:14) (Arnold 1989:80). The most plausible solution may be to combine the Old Testament ideas of "head" as "ruler" or leader" with the Greek medical ideas of the time, that viewed the head as the strongest power in a human being and as the power animating the body (Arnold 1989:81). J.B. Lightfoot was one of the first to take note of the Greek medical ideas perceiving the head as the inspiring, ruling, guiding, sustaining and life-giving force to the body (Arnold 1989:81). The medical background to the concept of the *σῶμα* also fits well with Paul's use of the body metaphor in this letter and elsewhere.⁷⁵ It is probably correct to view the head/body metaphor in Ephesians as a development of the concept of the "body of Christ" in Paul's earlier writings (Arnold 1989:80).

The *σῶμα αὐτοῦ* in 1:23 is best understood as qualifying the *ἐκκλησία* in 1:22. The church of God being the body of Christ highlights the notion of the personal presence of a powerful "head" who strengthens, guides, rules and sustains his body. The *πάντα* in 1:22b seemingly has the same cosmic meaning as the *πάντα* in 1:22a. The phrase *ὑπὲρ πάντα* is understood as attributive to *κεφαλήν*. Christ Jesus is therefore believed by the author to have been given to the church as the head over "everything", including the entire cosmos. An alternate view is to see *ὑπὲρ πάντα* as defining *κεφαλή*, which would mean God gave Jesus to the church as the "the supreme head of the church". The former

⁷⁵ Ephesians 4:15-16 reads, "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." cf. also Ephesians 5:29, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

interpretation better fits the context (Hoehner 2006:288-289). τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ could refer to the universal church (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:28, 15:6, Galatians 1:13, Philippians 3:6) or the local gathering of believers (cf. Romans 16:5, 1 Corinthians 16:19, 1 Corinthians 1:2). Paul's usage of this term elsewhere in the letter seems to indicate that the "universal" church is more in view here (cf. Ephesians 3:10, 5:23, 5:24). However, one must not dismiss altogether the notion of the local house churches in Ephesus and surrounds as "earthly manifestations" of the "universal church", that would no doubt also benefit from Christ's headship over the universe (O'Brien 1999:147). According to Paul, the power of God was demonstrated by God enthroning Christ Jesus as Lord over the universe and also giving this Jesus to the church as head. The Ephesian believers who feared the "powers" would have been greatly encouraged to know that, by God's exceeding power, Christ Jesus was exercising his lordship on behalf of the church of which these believers were members. The headship of Christ also depicts the church as dependent on Christ and in subordination to him (Lincoln 1990:72).

The last phrase τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου ("the fullness of him who fills all things in every respect") in 1:23 qualifies the σῶμα αὐτοῦ. O'Brien views this as one of the most complex clauses in Ephesians (O'Brien 1999:149). The issues arising here are, according to Best: (i) How does the πλήρωμα clause relate to the rest of 1:22, 23? (ii) What is the meaning of πλήρωμα? (iii) How are we to understand the participle πληρουμένου? (Best 2006:183).

Concerning issue (i): Does the πλήρωμα clause stand in apposition to σῶμα in 1:23 ("the church is the fullness") or to αὐτὸν in 1:22 ("Christ is the fullness")? It seems best to understand πλήρωμα as in apposition to σῶμα for reasons of proximity and grammar, as both words agree in gender, case and number (Hoehner 2006:296).

Concerning issue (ii): When πλήρωμα is used with its corresponding verb πλήροω it usually conveys the idea of “completeness, the lack of lacunae” (Hoehner 2006:295). πλήρωμα is either in the passive or middle form and can therefore be understood either as passive (“that which is being filled”), middle (“that which is being filled by itself”), or middle with an active significance (“that which fills”). Paul generally employed πλήρωμα in the passive sense and in 1:10 it is used in this way (Arnold 1989:83). The context of the letter also supports a passive understanding of πλήρωμα, as Christ (4:10) and the Spirit (5:18) are understood to be active powers that fill, rather than powers that are being filled (Arnold 1989:83). The σῶμα is then viewed as being the fullness of (or being filled by) Christ. The concept of πλήρωμα most likely reflects Old Testament influence. In the Old Testament the verb “to fill” and the adjective “full” were often used to describe the filling of the divine presence or essence (cf. 1 Kings 8:10, 27, Psalm 72:19, Jeremiah 23:24, Ezekiel 44:4) (Hoehner 2006:304). The author was conveying the idea that the church was being filled with the presence, essence, glory and power of the enthroned Christ.⁷⁶

Concerning issue (iii): πληρουμένου is a passive or middle present participle. If the participle is used passively, it signifies that the church is the fullness of Christ, who is “being filled” (by God or by the church) (O’Brien 1999:150). Some scholars that hold to this view understand the phrase τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου to be referring to God filling Christ, and then Christ in turn filling the church (Hoehner 2006:300). In this case τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν is used adverbially to describe how Christ is being filled “wholly, entirely and absolutely” by God. Alternatively, if the middle participle is interpreted as active, it would mean that the church is the fullness of Christ and that this is the Christ who “fills” τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν. In Koine Greek the middle voice may have an active sense (O’Brien 1999:151). Τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν is then used adverbially to describe that which Christ fills (Arnold 1989:84, Barth 1974a:209). The latter option,

⁷⁶ Cf. also Ephesians 3:19, 4:13 that confirm this understanding of πλήρωμα.

highlighting again the supremacy of Christ Jesus, seems to make more sense in the context of the “power” motif of Paul’s prayer as it interprets τὰ πάντα in a consistent fashion (cf. Ephesians 1:21, 22, 3:9). Christ not only fills the church, but fills “all things in every respect”. As opposed to the local house churches being insignificant, powerless religious groups on the periphery of the Greco-Roman religious world, Paul aligns them with the cosmic Christ who is ruling the universe for the benefit of the church. The third demonstration of God’s power was therefore, according to Paul, God giving Christ Jesus as head to the church.

4.2.4 Conclusion

Jesus Christ, according to Paul in Ephesians, is the cosmic Lord whose presence fills the entire universe and who wields his supreme power on behalf of the church. Therefore, he argues, the believers in Ephesus and surrounds needed not to fear the “powers”, nor the influence of magic, as a far greater power was available to them by faith, and not through magical incantation. It has been observed that the prayer in 1:15-23 was carefully crafted using particular terminology and semantic concepts that both the Jewish and Gentile believers would have been familiar with. This helped Paul to communicate to the readers the greatness of their salvation and the supreme Lordship of Christ Jesus, with particular regard to the triumph of the power of God over any and every other “power”, including the Ephesian Artemis. Terms and concepts and “phenomena ‘outside’ the text” (Robbins 1996:40) that were used and practiced in western Asia Minor were reformulated by Paul in his letter to demonstrate the exceeding greatness of the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Ephesian believers were not to live in fear of magic, demonic reprisals or the dreaded evil eye because, according to Paul, Christ Jesus is superior to all other “powers” and the power of God that is at work in Christ Jesus was now being wielded for the benefit of the church. In his letter, Paul assured his readers that the “powers” were not in control and that the believers were not in any way in bondage to them, nor did they need to placate them (Ferdinando 1999:295).

4.3 Overview of power and the “powers” in Ephesians

We will now seek to demonstrate that the religious and magical worldview of the first century profoundly influenced the entire letter to the Ephesians, and not only 1:15-23, through a cursory exegesis of the texts in Ephesians that refer to the notion of power or the “powers”, using aspects of both the grammatical-historical and the socio-rhetorical methods of interpretation. It seems that the author continues throughout the letter to address the particular fears and concerns of the Ephesians, by employing and reformulating terms and concepts to demonstrate not only the reality of the recipients’ conflict with the “powers”, but also Christ Jesus’ and the church’s relationship with these “powers”. The author’s conviction of Christ’s lordship over the “powers” and the availability of “God’s full armour” to believers (Ephesians 6:11) was of particular relevance to the people of Ephesus and surrounds.

4.3.1 Ephesians 1:15-23

Paul understood the list of powers in 1:21 to be supernatural or angelic in nature, as we have attempted to demonstrate in 3.5. Paul viewed the “powers” as enemies of God, as the allusion in 1:20 to Psalm 110:1 indicates⁷⁷. The ideas of Psalm 110 resonate with Paul’s point of view. God’s power is, according to Paul, exceedingly greater than the power of these “powers”, as evidenced in the death, resurrection, enthronement, lordship and headship of Christ Jesus. Paul argues that the power of God is also available to the Ephesian believers themselves by virtue of their union with Christ. The believers thus need no longer live in fear of the “powers” as represented by Artemis, magic, curses or demonic attack, because God’s power in Jesus is able to protect and preserve the believers until the end of the current age (1:10).

⁷⁷ In Ephesians 6:12 the “powers” are also presented as evil opponents of God and his people acting in concert with the “devil”.

4.3.2 Ephesians 2:1-3

Text: (1) Καὶ ὑμᾶς ὄντας νεκροὺς τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν, (2) ἐν αἷς ποτε περιεπατήσατε κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, κατὰ τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος, τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ νῦν ἐνεργοῦντος ἐν τοῖς υἱοῖς τῆς ἀπειθείας: (3) ἐν οἷς καὶ ἡμεῖς πάντες ἀνεστράφημέν ποτε ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῆς σαρκὸς ἡμῶν, ποιοῦντες τὰ θελήματα τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ τῶν διανοιῶν, καὶ ἡμεθα τέκνα φύσει ὀργῆς ὡς καὶ οἱ λοιποί:

Translation: (1) And you being dead in your transgressions and sins, (2) in which you formerly walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the realm of the air, the Spirit now working in the sons of disobedience; (3) among whom we also all formerly lived in the desires of our flesh, doing the wishes of the flesh and its thoughts, and we were by nature children of wrath just as the rest.

In 2:1-3 Paul described the Ephesian believers' hopeless condition before they had come to experience the power of God in Christ Jesus which had transformed their lives. According to the author they were (spiritually) "dead", which figuratively describes the state of being lost or under the dominion of death and also denotes an inability to communicate with the living God (O'Brien 1999:156, Hoehner 2006:308). This condition was, according to Paul, due to their "transgression and sins" (2:1) and therefore the recipients needed to be made "alive" (2:5) in Christ. 2:1-10 can therefore be described as a continuation and application of the theme of the power of God's actions in Christ (O'Brien 1999:154). Before God had made the believers alive in Christ, the believers were influenced by the environment (τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, 2:2), by a supernaturally powerful opponent (τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος, 2:2) and by an inner inclination towards evil (ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῆς σαρκὸς ἡμῶν, 2:3) (O'Brien 1999:155). Of interest to our study is the second influence mentioned above.

As we have seen, ἄρχων could denote heavenly or earthly powers and could refer also to Satan himself in the Intertestamental literature. ἐξουσία can be translated as “authority, government or power” or “domain, realm or kingdom” (Hoehner 2006:311). The term therefore denotes the “realm” or “sphere” of the ruler’s influence (Arnold 1989:60). The ἀήρ in ancient times was believed to be the intermediate sphere between earth and heaven, and also the dwelling space of hostile spirits (Hoehner 2006:312), as the Intertestamental literature and magical papyri indicate. Contrary to ideas presented by Wink and a more recent western understanding, the ἀήρ was not the atmosphere of opinion of ideas, attitudes and the like (Wink 1984:84, O’Brien 1999:160). Paul, it appears, was referring in 2:2 to the leader or chief of the evil heavenly powers, and not a “disposition” or general “attitude”. Later in Ephesians the term is clarified to mean the “devil” (4:27, 6:11) and the “evil one” (6:16) (Barth 1974a:228). Consistent with this interpretation, O’Brien believes that it is best to understand τοῦ πνεύματος (2:2) as in apposition to τὸν ἄρχοντα (2:2) and therefore as describing further the ruler of the air (O’Brien 1999:160, Arnold 1989:61, contra Hoehner 2006:313-314). The “ruler of the realm of the air” is therefore the “spirit” who continues (νῦν ἐνεργούντος) to exercise a strong and compelling influence over the recipients of the letter. There is no reason to view the author as taking steps towards the demythologizing of the “powers” in this passage (Arnold 1989:60). Barth, like Wink, understands the τοῦ πνεύματος to be in apposition to ἀέρος (“atmosphere”) and therefore best understands it as “atmosphere”, with its many English meanings and nuances (Barth 1974a:214). However, Barth, contra Wink, does see τὸν ἄρχοντα (2:2) as referring to the devil (cf. 6:11) (Barth 1974a:214).

The Ephesian believers were not only living according to their own consciences and contemporary ideologies and practices, but were also living under the influence of a supernatural hostile power, according to the author. Although the ruler of the realm of the air had been defeated by Christ Jesus and was subject to

Jesus (as is the case of all “powers” hostile to God, according to Paul), he is portrayed here as continuing to make his powerful, yet limited, influence felt in the Roman Empire (O’Brien 1999:161). Satan and the various “powers” still posed a threat to the Ephesian believers, according to 4:27 and 6:10-12.

4.3.3 Ephesians 2:6

Text: (6) καὶ συνήγειρεν καὶ συνεκάθισεν ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ

Translation: (6) and [God] raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus

In this text, Paul described what God had done for the formerly spiritually “dead” (2:1) Ephesian believers. The three verbs in 2:5-6 with the *συν* prefix (*συνεζωοποίησεν*, *συνήγειρεν*, *συνεκάθισεν*) describe what God had done for the believers and the terminology is consciously dependent on 1:20. It seems that the author in 2:6 was expounding what means to be “made alive together with Christ” in 2:5 (O’Brien 1999:170). *συνεγείρω* is in the aorist tense and can be translated as “raised up with” (Perschbacher 1990:390). Normally in the Pauline literature, the resurrection of believers is presented as a future concept, yet here Paul is describing a past event in the believer’s life. Paul, alluding to 1:20, maintains that believers, who were spiritually “dead” (2:1) were spiritually “resurrected”, just as Jesus was physically resurrected after being physically dead. According to Paul, God’s power was at work in the raising of Jesus and the implication is that that same power is at work in spiritually raising the believers from their spiritually dead state. The text speaks about the Ephesian believers’ positional resurrection, and not their physical future resurrection (Hoehner 2006:334).

Having raised Jesus out of the dead, God then “seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms” (1:20). The believers too had been *συνεκάθισεν ἐν τοῖς*

ἐπουρανίους.⁷⁸ The phrase ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις indicates that in some sense believers already had a “heavenly status with heavenly power” (Hoehner 2006:334). The believers now shared in Christ Jesus’ enthronement high above the “powers” (1:21). The last prepositional phrase ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ should probably be seen as joined to the verb συγκαθίζω, emphasizing that it is the believers’ union with Jesus that gives them these spiritual advantages. The solidarity between Jesus and the believers is indeed highlighted by use of the συν-compounds. The union with Jesus had enabled the believers to participate in the divine eschatological act of resurrection (Allen 1986:106). However, Paul, in contrast to some scholarly opinion, also reveals a belief that this eschatology is not fully and wholly realized in this age because he pointed to the future “coming ages” where God will “show the incomparable riches of his grace” (2:7).

The spiritual exaltation in 2:6 would be of particular relevance to the believers in western Asia Minor. Allen notes that this spiritual exaltation not only would have the believers’ personal inward being, but actually the total spiritual framework in which the believer, inwardly and outwardly, lived and related to God and the world, including the “powers” (Allen 1986:106). According to Barth, the believers’ “spiritual” resurrection and seating gave them a sound theological perspective when assessing their own relationship and position with regard to the sinister spiritual “powers” that controlled the socio-political and indeed other structures of life (cf. Barth 1974a:237-238). By virtue of their union with Jesus, the believers may now, according to the author, share in the authority of Jesus over the “powers”. As a result, the power of the latter’s influence over the believers’ lives had been broken (Arnold 1992b:467). According to Barth, “the saints are closer to heaven and more firmly established there now than theatre-goers who have reserved tickets in their pockets and wait for admission” (Barth 1974a:238). According to Paul, this exaltation is obtainable not through magic, incantations or secret signs, but through faith in Christ Jesus.

⁷⁸ Significantly, believers are not said to be at God’s right hand (1:20) as that position of supreme power is reserved only for Jesus.

4.2.4 Ephesians 3:10

Text: (10) ἵνα γνωρισθῇ νῦν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἐξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἡ πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ

Translation: (10) in order that the multi-coloured wisdom of God may be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms through the church

In 3:10 Paul states the grand purpose (ἵνα) of God, in his ministry as a “servant of God” (3:7), which came about “through the working of [God’s] power” (3:7). Paul’s ministry consisted of “preaching” (εὐαγγελίσασθαι, 3:8) the “incomprehensible wealth of Christ” (3:8) and “enlightening” (φωτίσαι, 3:9) all of the “administration of [God’s] mystery” (3:9). The purpose of this God-empowered ministry is stated in 3:10. Γνωρισθῇ (3:10) is an aorist subjunctive passive and can be translated as “to be made known”. God, according to Paul, wanted to make known his “multi-coloured wisdom” to the “rulers and authorities” (3:10). The “rulers” and “authorities” are, like the rest of the “powers” in *Ephesians*, probably not human agencies or institutions because they are ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις. However, we must remember that it was nearly impossible in the first century to distinguish between the sacred and secular and the natural and supernatural. Barth therefore concludes that, according to the author, the church is called to be an example to the “institutions and structures”, “the bodily and spiritual” and the “political and social, cultural and religious forces” (Barth 1974a:365).

Paul wanted the multi-ethnic churches of western Asia Minor, consisting of Jewish and Gentile believers, to be brought together in unity and “being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” (2:22), to know that their very existence and being (γνωρισθῇ is passive) was tangible evidence of God’s multi-coloured wisdom to the whole host of heavenly beings (Hoehner 2006:462, O’Brien 1999:246). The terms “rulers” and “authorities” seem to include both the good and evil inhabitants of the “heavenly realms” in this

context, but perhaps particularly the hostile spirits (Arnold 1989:64). Arnold believes that this text (3:10) would serve as an encouragement to those believers who were still plagued by a fear of the “powers”, as these feared “powers” would perceive that they were unable to impede the progress of the gospel and the establishment of the church of Jesus Christ (Arnold 1989:64). Hoehner speculates that Paul may have believed that the hostility between the Jewish people and the Gentiles was encouraged and aided by the evil “powers” and/or by agents or agencies influenced by these “powers” (Hoehner 2006:462). The existence of the multi-ethnic church would then demonstrate to the heavenly “powers” that their authority had been decisively broken and they could not hinder the advance of the gospel to both Gentiles and Jews (O’Brien 1999:247).

Artemis may have been the patron goddess of Ephesus and she may once have been held in high esteem by these readers, but, according to Paul, her power had been broken and the very existence of the church in Ephesus and surrounds was evidence thereof. 2 Corinthians 4:4 may also provide insight into this text. Paul wrote here that “the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel” (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4). The phrase ὁ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου (“the god of this age”) should probably be identified in Paul’s thinking with τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ αἔρος, τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ νῦν ἐνεργοῦντος ἐν τοῖς υἱοῖς τῆς ἀπειθείας (“the ruler of the realm of the air, the spirit now working in the sons of disobedience”, 2:2). One of the strategies (μεθοδείας, 6:11) of this ruler seems to be that of “blind[ing] the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel” (2 Corinthians 4:4) (Hiebert 2000:120). Paul saw the other religions of the Greco-Roman world, including the cult of Artemis, as idolatry (cf. 1 Corinthians 8:4, 12:2) and demon worship (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:20). It is not too difficult to accept that Paul believed that these idolatrous religions were deceptions encouraged by “the god of this age” (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4) or the τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου (6:12) to keep unbelievers minds’ blinded to the revelation of the true God in Jesus Christ. Ferdinando believes that the association of demons with false

teaching and pagan religion echoes what is said elsewhere in the Pauline literature of Satan's role in inspiring religious deception (Ferdinando 1999:256).

The very existence of the church then, including the house churches in Ephesus, was, according to Paul, a demonstration to the "powers" that God's purpose to "bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head" (1:10) and to unite Gentiles and Jews (3:6) could not be hindered. The deception strategy of the "powers" had been overcome by the power of God in Jesus. Instead of the heavenly beings mediating wisdom to humans, it is the church that mediates God's wisdom to them (cf. Barnard 2009:167).

4.3.5 Ephesians 3:16-19

Text: (16) ἵνα δῶ ὑμῖν κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ δυνάμει κραταιωθῆναι διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν ἕσω ἄνθρωπον, (17) κατοικῆσαι τὸν Χριστὸν διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν, ἐν ἀγάπῃ ἐρριζωμένοι καὶ τεθεμελιωμένοι, (18) ἵνα ἐξισχύσητε καταλαβέσθαι σὺν παῶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις τί τὸ πλάτος καὶ μήκος καὶ ὕψος καὶ βάθος, (19) γινῶναί τε τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν τῆς γνώσεως ἀγάπην τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἵνα πληρωθῆτε εἰς πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ.

Translation: (16) in order that he may give you power according to the wealth of his glory to be strengthened through his Spirit in the inner person, (17) that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith in order that you, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) may have the strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, (19) [and] to know the love of Christ that exceeds knowledge, in order that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Paul prayed in this text that God would empower (δυνάμει, 3:16) the Ephesian believers out of the "wealth of his [God's] glory" (3:16). The purpose of the Spirit's empowering was that Jesus would permanently dwell (κατοικῆσαι, 3:17)

in the believers. Hoehner believes that this is not a reference to Christ's indwelling at the moment of conversion, but instead denotes the goal of Christ "being at home in" the very centre of the believers' lives (Hoehner 2006:481). It may be more exegetically correct to observe that Christ dwelling in the believers' inner person ("hearts", 3:17a) was not the stated purpose or reason for the Spirit's empowering (3:16). Rather, Christ's dwelling in the hearts of believers explains and amplifies what it is to be strengthened by the Spirit (O'Brien 1999:258-259). Christ dwelling in the believers' hearts is a further definition of the Spirit's strengthening. Paul was therefore praying that God, out of his vast resources, would enable the Ephesian believers to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. This would be demonstrated when, more and more, Christ Jesus would be at the centre of their lives, exercising his rule and reign over every aspect of their being. Christ was to rule over the recipients' reason, will and decisions (Barth 1974a:370).

The two purposes (ἵνα, 3:18) of the Spirit's strengthening by Christ's indwelling are stated in 3:17b-19. The first purpose was for the believers to comprehend the vastness of the power of God and the second was for the believers to know the enormity of the love of Christ. The second purpose is dependent on the first. The author's first request was that his readers may "comprehend what was the breadth and length and height and depth" (3:18). The request is made without any reference to an object for these four dimensions. Scholars have argued for various implied objects, from the wisdom of God to the dimensions of the heavenly inheritance (Arnold 1989:93). The most common interpretation views the matchless love of Christ as the object of these dimensions. Paul was therefore praying that the Ephesian believers would be empowered to grasp the vastness of Christ's love for them (O'Brien 1999:263, Hoehner 2006:488, Barth 1974a:397). Arnold, however, has convincingly argued that the four dimensions in 3:18 would have been best understood by the original readers as a reference to the power of God (Arnold 1989:90-95). The four dimensions appear in the magical papyri as an expression of supernatural power (cf. PGM IV.964-974, 979-985). The Ephesian believers, with their background of magical beliefs and

practices, would not have been confused by Paul's lack of a corresponding object to the four dimensions, but would probably have recognised the terms as an expression of supernatural power. Arnold suggests the following paraphrase for 3:18, "[I pray] that you might be able to grasp with all the saints what is the incredible vastness of the power of God" (1989:95). Paul's prayer in chapter three then further intensifies his prayer in chapter one. Not only should the believers be aware of God's great power (ch.1), but the believers should also experience that vast power in their lives through divine inner strengthening (ch.3).

The second purpose Paul mentioned for the inner strengthening of the Holy Spirit was that the believers may "know the love of Christ that exceeds knowledge" (3:19). The knowing of that which is humanly unknowable is only possible by the empowering and enabling of God in Jesus Christ (3:16-17a). This was not a request for the readers to love Jesus more, but for the readers to understand Christ Jesus' love for them (O'Brien 1999:264).

The author has carefully and deliberately crafted this prayer in stark contrast to the attitudes of the pagan world (Arnold 1989:100). In the Greco-Roman world, magic was used for self-serving purposes, in order to gain an advantage over others in a variety of ways, whether it be cursing others or attracting a lover (cf. 2.3.5 – 2.3.7 above). God's power, according to the author of Ephesians, enables the believer to know (or grasp) the extraordinary love of Jesus (3:19) and to be rooted and grounded in that love (3:17). Elsewhere in the letter Paul shows that the vast power of God is needed for the believer to *live* consistently with this love (5:2). The prayer for power and strengthening is not a prayer for selfish personal benefit or fulfilment, but a request to the all-powerful God, who is rich in glory, that he empower the believers to grasp Christ's love for them. The ultimate goal of this prayer (ἐν αὐτῷ, 3:19) is that the believers "be filled with all the fullness of God" (3:19). The author had already referred to the church as Christ's "fullness" (1:23). Here again the eschatological tension between the "already/now" and the "not yet" in all Pauline writings is observed. The Ephesian church is "already" the

fullness of Christ, but the believers should still be filled with the divine fullness to a greater degree (Arnold 1989:97).

Paul therefore, using terminology and concepts readily understandable to his readers, prayed for power in the lives of the recipients for the over-arching purpose of spiritual maturity (“Christ may dwell in your hearts”, 3:17) and spiritual comprehension (of Christ’s power and Christ’s love), in the midst of a power-seeking, power-manipulating environment. Knowing the vast power within them for God’s intended purposes would further enable the believers in that first-century polytheistic world to rid themselves of the prevalent fear of the “powers” and to better understand their newfound status as believers in Christ Jesus.

4.3.6 Ephesians 3:20-21

Text: (20) Τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ ὑπὲρ πάντα ποιῆσαι ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ ὧν αἰτούμεθα ἢ νοοῦμεν κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἡμῖν, (21) αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ εἰς πάσας τὰς γενεὰς τοῦ αἰῶνος τῶν αἰώνων· ἀμήν.

Translation: (20) Now to him who is able [empowered] to do infinitely beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us, (21) to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus in all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

Paul ended the prayer of 3:14-19 with a doxology, namely a “short, spontaneous ascription of praise to God” (O’Brien 1999:266). One immediately notices the three “power” words in the doxology: δύναμαι, δύναμις and ἐνεργέω. In the context of the letter, these three words refer to divine power. It is of relevance to this study to note that Paul ascribes praise to God because his power, the power that raised and enthroned Christ Jesus (1:20), is the same power that raised the believers with Jesus (2:6), and that was at work in the Ephesian believers (3:19).

Furthermore, Paul states that this power of God could achieve infinitely beyond anything the Ephesian believers could ask or think.

The term δόξα reflects the essence of one's being, the summation of all one's attributes and, in this context, specifically refers to God's splendour, radiance and power (Hoehner 2006:494). O'Brien maintains that to give God glory is not to add something to him, but rather it is the acknowledgement or the extolling of who he is or what he has done (cf. Psalm 29:2, 96:8) (O'Brien 1999:268). Paul could praise God not only for his past powerful actions in Jesus, but also for his powerful actions in the present ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (3:21).

The recipients needed to know that the power of God, which was able to do infinitely and exceedingly more than they could imagine, was at work in them; not for earthly, selfish, manipulative reasons, but for the glory of God. Paul once again reiterates, by his terminology and by inference, that the believers need not fear the hostile "powers" of the Greco-Roman world because the "superabundant" power of God was working for their benefit (Arnold 1989:100).

4.3.7 Ephesians 4:8-10 4

Text: (8) διὸ λέγει, Ἀναβὰς εἰς ὕψος ἡχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν, ἔδωκεν δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις. (9) {τὸ δὲ Ἀνέβη τί ἐστὶν εἰ μὴ ὅτι καὶ κατέβη εἰς τὰ κατώτερα [μέρη] τῆς γῆς; (10) ὁ καταβὰς αὐτός ἐστιν καὶ ὁ ἀναβὰς ὑπεράνω πάντων τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἵνα πληρώσῃ τὰ πάντα.}

Translation: (8) Therefore it says, "Having ascended on high he led captive captives, he gave gifts to men". (9) Now what does "he ascended" mean, if not that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth? (10) He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens in order that he may fill all things.

In Ephesians 4:8-10 Paul further stressed Jesus Christ's supremacy over all things, particularly the "powers". Paul had just asserted in 4:7 that Christ had given spiritual gifts to the Ephesian believers and Paul believed that this could be inferred from Psalm 68, from which he quoted (cf. Psalm 68:18). In Psalm 68:18 God is depicted as leading a group of prisoners up the temple mount as a sign of his triumph⁷⁹ (Arnold 1989:57, Lincoln 1981:156). Paul in this Ephesian passage gave the Psalm a Christological interpretation and Christ Jesus is seen as the one who is triumphantly ascending "far above all the heavens" (3:10). In Psalm 68:18 the prisoners are the "rebellious" enemies of Israel who were defeated when Jerusalem was taken captive (Hoehner 2006:529). In the Ephesian context, the "captives" seem to be best understood as the "enemies" of God, represented by the sinister "powers" (1:21) (Barth 1974b:477). Paul, by Old Testament allusion, is thus emphasizing the triumph of Jesus Christ over the demonic forces to the extent that the "powers" can be considered as Christ's captives. This insight would have brought further comfort to the readers who, it seems, still lived with a certain amount of apprehension to the "powers".

The second half of the Old Testament quotation has been the cause of much scholarly debate, as the author of Ephesians changes "he received" (Psalm 68:18) to "he gave" (4:8). A wide variety of possible solutions are given for this. Some scholars maintain that Paul re-interpreted the Psalm to suit his own needs (Barth 1974b:476), whilst others believe that the concept of giving gifts is also found in the Psalm and that the Ephesian author was therefore simply summarising the teaching of the entire psalm, and not only Psalm 68:18 (O'Brien 1999:289-292). One cannot be sure, but it seems the latter view is more consistent with the author's use of the Old Testament in other passages.⁸⁰ However one views the change in wording, the overarching truth expressed by

⁷⁹ There is no agreement on the historical setting of this psalm. Gary Smith has the interesting view that the "captives" in Psalm 68:18 refer to the Levites, who were taken "captive" by God to serve him. The Levites were in turn "given" back to the Israelites to serve in the temple. Therefore the captives are the gifts. Smith believes that this fits well in the context of Ephesian 4 where Paul asserts that God gifts certain people to serve his church (Smith 1975:187-188).

⁸⁰ Cf. Ephesians 6:2-3, where the author quotes from Deuteronomy 5:16 and Ephesians 4:26a, which is a quotation from Psalm 4:4. The author does not re-interpret the Old Testament passage, but applies it in a way that is consistent with its original context.

Paul that the triumphant Christ gave gifts to his followers remains unchanged. The “powers” were thought to dwell in the “heavens”, but Jesus had ascended ὑπεράνω πάντων τῶν οὐρανῶν (3:10). Christ Jesus had, according to Paul, assumed the position of sovereignty over the world as πρωτοθρονία or κοσμοκράτορες, much like God in Psalm 68, and was now able to and entitled to bestow gifts on his people. The recipients, whose lives were dominated by the “powers”, would have surely found this text to be comforting and cheering.

4.3.8 Ephesians 4:26-27

Text: (26) ὀργίσεσθε καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε: ὁ ἥλιος μὴ ἐπιδυέτω ἐπὶ [τῷ] παροργισμῷ ὑμῶν, (27) μηδὲ δίδοτε τόπον τῷ διαβόλῳ.

Translation: (26) “Be angry do not sin”; do not let the sun go down on your provocation, (27) nor give opportunity to the devil.

The word “devil” only occurs again in this letter in 6:11, in the context of spiritual warfare against the “powers”. The author of Ephesians seemingly believed that the “powers” were closely associated with the “devil”. This will be further explored in the next subsection. Although the believers had, according to Paul, been raised with Christ and seated in the heavenlies (2:6) they were still, he argues, engaged in a struggle with the “powers” (6:12). 4:26-27 provides an example of one of the devil’s strategies (μεθοδείας, 6:11) and how this warfare was to be fought against by believers (O’Brien 1999:341).

Uncontrolled anger could provide the devil with an opportunity to cause strife and disunity in the life of the believer or in the house churches. Hoehner believes that the author identified the “devil” (4:27) with the “Satan” in Zechariah 3:1-2 because of the quotation from Zechariah 8:16 in 4:25. In both Ephesians 4:27 and Zechariah 3:1-2, the devil seeks to create divisiveness amongst the people of God (Hoehner 2006:623). In Ephesus and surrounds uncontrolled anger would

grant the devil⁸¹ this opportunity. The devil's strategies are not limited to the exploitation of uncontrolled anger, but also lying (4:25), stealing (4:28), and unwholesome talk (4:29), all of which appear in the exhortatory context of 4:25-31. What is interesting to note is that although the "powers" have been defeated on the cross and the believers have shared in that victory, the defeated enemy still, according to Paul, exerted some power to subvert the purposes of God among the Ephesian believers. Thus the exhortations to "stand firm" against devil in chapter six.

4.3.9 Ephesians 6:10-12

Text: (10) Τοῦ λοιποῦ ἐνδυναμοῦσθε ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ κράτει τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ. (11) ἐνδύσασθε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὸ δύνασθαι ὑμᾶς στῆναι πρὸς τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου: (12) ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πάλη πρὸς αἷμα καὶ σάρκα, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς, πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας, πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου, πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις.

Translation: (10) Finally, be empowered in the Lord and in his mighty strength. (11) Put on God's full armour in order that you may be able to stand against the strategies of the devil; (12) because our conflict is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the evil spiritual hosts in the heavenly realms.

In 6:10-18 Paul developed the theme of the hostility of the "powers" towards the church. The struggle is portrayed in imagery reminiscent of the holy warfare⁸² of Israel (Arnold 1993a:751). However, the enemies here, unlike Israel's warfare, are not αἷμα καὶ σάρκα, but τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις (1:12). Paul describes the continual warfare of the evil forces against believers

⁸¹ Martin Luther, contra John Calvin, understood τῷ διαβόλῳ to refer to a human slanderer (Barth 1974:514).

⁸² Although Paul never spoke of a "Holy War" as he probably sought to avoid supporting a dualistic or mythological attitude (cf. Barth 1974:763).

and then exhorts the believers to be empowered in the Lord Jesus⁸³ in order to withstand these attacks (“flaming arrows”,⁸⁴ 6:16) of the evil one. The phrase ἐν κυρίῳ in 6:10 probably denotes the sphere from which the believer’s power comes, namely, in the Lord Jesus or in union with the Lord Jesus (Hoehner 2006:821). The fact that ἐνδυναμοῦσθε is a passive participle indicates that the believer has *received* the action and, by implication, that the Lord Jesus performed the action. In 6:11 the author explains why the believers needed to be empowered (6:10): They were engaged in a conflict with the “devil”. The διαβόλος (6:11, ὁ πονηρός in 6:16) should be identified with the Old Testament figure of Satan (cf. 4:27, 2 Corinthians 2:11).⁸⁵ Paul singles him out as the primary enemy, the chief of the opposing army, who is able to operate through human beings (cf. 2:2, 4:14) (Lincoln 1990:443).

We might find it strange that Paul described the “present age” as τοῦ σκότους τούτου (“of this darkness”, 6:12). Paul often employs the metaphor of darkness and light to illustrate the contrast between good and evil (cf. 5:8, 2 Corinthians 4:3-6). Paul, in this text, wrote from the perspective of the present age rather than from the perspective of the age to come. “This age” in Jewish apocalyptic literature is marked by sin and darkness and is ruled by the forces of evil (Guelich 1991:44). In “this age” where the devil (6:11) or “the ruler of the kingdom of the air” (2:2) has sway, Paul calls the believers to “stand” (6:11, 13, 14). As shown in 3.2 above, Belial (Satan) was considered in the Intertestamental literature to be “the spirit of darkness”, the one who exercised control over the world and evil people.

How would the believers stand firm against the “devil” and “world rulers of this darkness”? Paul instructs them ἐνδύσασθε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ (“put on God’s full armour”, 6:11) which may simply mean that the Ephesian believers

⁸³ The phrase ἐν κυρίῳ in Ephesians refers to Jesus; not to God. Cf. 2:21, 4:1, 17, 5:8, 6:1, 21

⁸⁴ Barth views these attacks as any external threats to believers, such as persecution or assimilation imposed on them by religious, cultural, or political forces in their environment (Barth 1974:774).

⁸⁵ In 2 Corinthians 2:11 it is Satan’s schemes that the Corinthians should be aware of.

were meant to keep trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, the divine warrior of Isaiah 56:16-21, and to keep living lives “worthy of the calling” (4:1).⁸⁶ Paul argues that the day of salvation has come and the war has been won because God has, in Jesus, subjected the “powers” (1:21) to himself. But the conflict continues until “the times will have reached their fulfilment” (1:10). Consequently the Ephesian believers were to enter the conflict, and not to defeat the “powers” themselves, but rather to stand firm. Paul’s warfare imagery here is chiefly defensive because the outcome of victory was never in doubt (Guelich 1991:50). Believers, he argues, have enough spiritual resources, as explained elsewhere in the letter, to withstand any attack of the “devil” or the “evil spiritual hosts” (6:12).

Τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας in 6:12 can be seen as a comprehensive term covering all the before-mentioned classes of hostile spirits, with the additional phrase ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις indicating their locality (O’Brien 1999:467). Hoehner convincingly argues that τὰ πνευματικὰ should be understood to mean “spiritual beings” or “spiritual hosts” rather than impersonal “spiritual forces” (NIV). This understanding is consistent with Paul’s use of other nouns in 6:12 that indicate spiritual beings or armies, rather than abstract spiritual forces (Hoehner 2006:828). This interpretation would certainly correspond to Paul’s Second Temple Judaism background where understanding the “powers” as personal, spiritual beings was demonstrated in the Intertestamental literature.

Paul’s message to his readers was that the pagan deities, including Artemis, were not harmless, but neither were they all-powerful (Arnold 1989:67). These “powers” were emissaries and cohorts of the “devil” and had to be and could be resisted by putting on the empowering armour of the all-powerful God by faith in Christ Jesus. Although the victory for believers was ensured by the virtue of Jesus’ victory over the powers, the present age was (and is) characterised by

⁸⁶ Isaiah 59:16-21 pictures the Lord of hosts as a warrior fighting with his own armour in order to vindicate his people (O’Brien 1999:463). This seems to indicate that the Ephesian believers were to put on God himself or rather to identify themselves with God and his purposes (O’Brien 1999:463). In the context of this letter that would mean to put one’s faith in Jesus and to live a worthy life.

conflict (πάλη, v12) with the “powers” because, although the “powers” have been defeated, they have not yet been destroyed.

4.4 Conclusion to chapter four

There is good reason to believe that the letter we know as Ephesians was authored by the Apostle Paul in the first century: In the letter, Paul employed and reformulated contemporary cosmological language and concepts from his time. The result is the presence of cultural echoes in the letter, that may be identified when the interpreter employs insights gained from the socio-rhetorical method of interpretation. It seems probable that this letter was written to, or at the very least was read by, the house churches in western Asia Minor, especially Ephesus and surrounds. The author’s point of departure is that of a first-century citizen with an intimate knowledge of the Greco-Roman religious worldview and cosmology. This is reflected in Paul’s semantic choices and terminology. The city of Ephesus, with its temple of Artemis, was a particular centre of cosmological concern and interest, with its religious and magical practices, traditions and beliefs. It is not difficult to appreciate the Ephesian believers’ religious concerns when one notes their change of allegiance from their former protectress and saviour, Artemis (cf. 2.3.2 above) to their newfound lord, Christ Jesus.

The author of Ephesians, particularly in the prayer of 1:15-23, provides us with a window into the socio-religious world of the Ephesian believers in Ephesus. However, the text is not just a window, but is in fact a reformist and revolutionist response to that cultural world (Robbins 1996:72-73). The author is reformist in that he assumed that the readers could create an environment of salvation in the world, using supernaturally given insights and revelation (1:9, 17), which in 1:15-23 was chiefly the assurance that Christ Jesus had triumphed over the “powers” (Tate 1996:345). Yet, the author is also revolutionist in that he assumed that ultimate salvation would only be achieved at the end of the present age (1:10), and until that time the believers would remain involved in a conflict with the

“powers” (Tate 1996:344). The realization that the power of God in Christ Jesus had triumphed over the “powers”, including Artemis, hostile spirits and demons, would reassure the Ephesian believers that they did not need to live in fear of the “powers” as they previously had done, or live in apprehension of possible retribution by these “powers”, because of their newfound religious commitment to Christ Jesus. Knowing that Christ Jesus had triumphed over all “powers” (1:21) - real or imagined - would have eased the anxiety created by the invocation of any possible curses or evil eyes directed towards the recipients. The believers no longer needed to seek protection in the form of amulets, as Paul explains that the supreme power was at work in them and for them (1:19). Although Paul argued that the possibility of conflict with the “powers” still remained in this age, the believers would be able to stand firm as they possessed “God’s full armour” (6:11). The Ephesian believers’ destiny was no longer in the hands of Artemis, but in the hands of the “God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:3, 11).

In past years, the letter of Ephesians has simply been regarded as a “general epistle” without any discernable contingency. But, when using a hermeneutic that deals seriously with the religious and magical worldview of the first-century Greco-Roman world, it is evident that this view is not entirely correct. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that the author was dealing with very real phenomena and socio-religious ideas, in the formulation of this letter. And this realization opens many exciting avenues for further study.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS SOME POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS OF THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST AS PRESENTED IN EPHESIANS IN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT

This conclusion (chapter five) serves to build on the insights gained in chapter four, as we briefly explore to what extent Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:15-23 has implications for the African context. It will be shown that there are definite analogies between the first-century Greco-Roman religious world, and the religious world of traditional Africa. This reality provides exciting avenues for the biblical interpreter to explore, especially in areas like the study of sacred texts. Wendland & Hachibamba have observed that the rhetorical setting of Asia Minor, as Clinton Arnold describes it, would be largely applicable to the analogous situation in Africa today (Wendland and Hachibamba 2000:346):

“Many converts were streaming into the churches - converts who were formerly affiliated with the Artemis cult, practised magic, consulted astrologers, and participated in various mysteries. Underlying the former beliefs and manner of life of all these converts was a common fear of the demonic “powers” (Arnold 1992a:122).

People who read the New Testament as a sacred text are interested in mapping the ways in which the text speaks about God and religious life, including the formation and nurturing of the religious community (Robbins 1996:120, 127, Knight 1996:13). Human redemption can be seen as a category on its own when reading a sacred text. This term refers to the transmission of benefits from the divine to humans as a result of events, rituals, or practices (Robbins 1990:125). Human redemption and the freedom from supernatural “powers”, through faith in Christ Jesus, seems to be a useful key in unlocking the message of Ephesians, and especially Ephesians 1:15-23, for the African church.

5.1 Dealing with the fear of the spirit realm (1:17-18)

Elements found in the first century Greco-Roman religious worldview are also evident today⁸⁷ in African Traditional Religion. The traditional African worldview maintains a belief in the invisible domain of spirits and forces (“powers”) and Moreau writes that there is “an almost universal acknowledgement of the reality of the spirits and the spirit realm” in Africa (Moreau 1990:102, Hiebert 2000:116). It is believed that the spirit realm impinges on the world of humanity and that these “powers” can be manipulated by human beings (Ferdinando 1999:1). Ferdinando agrees that both in biblical and African thought, suffering may be caused by spirit aggression. These metaphysical “powers” and “spirits” exert a powerful influence over those who believe in them, often creating (as in the first century) an atmosphere of constant fear and insecurity (Ferdinando 1999:1, cf. 2.3.8 above). Mbiti writes that “perhaps the most disturbing element in African life is the fear of bad magic, sorcery and witchcraft” (Mbiti 1991:165). Traditional Africans and even African believers have often attempted to deal with these concerns by reverting to the old ways of appeasing the ancestors and warding off evil influences with traditional medicine (Ferdinando 1999:3, Moreau 1990:121). Often Christ is not perceived to be powerful enough to deliver African believers from these “powers”, or Christ is understood to have no relevance regarding these profound-felt needs (Ferdinando 1999:3). The use and practice of protective magic through charms, potions, fetishes and body scarring is therefore commonplace in the African context (Moreau 1990:121).

The author of Ephesians presents Christ Jesus as triumphant over *all* “powers”, whether visible or invisible, physical or metaphysical. There is much debate around the nature and beliefs of African Traditional Religion and the correctness of even using one term to denote all the various and differing traditional religions in Africa. Nevertheless, one may consider how the Ephesian author’s emphasis of the power of God, as demonstrated in the triumphant Christ, may be put to

⁸⁷ Ferdinando believes that the African traditional worldview has not vanished despite the disappearance of much of the ritual that gives tangible expression to the traditional religion (Ferdinando 1999:2).

fruitful dialogue in addressing the African traditional view of the spirit world and the accompanying fear it creates. The Ephesian author originally intended to allay believers' fears, by reminding them that an even greater power was at work in them and for them. Christ Jesus, this most powerful power, overcame all the other "powers" in which the believers feared – whether real or imagined. The concept of the power of God as demonstrated through the triumphant Christ could thus have profound implications for believers in Africa who share a similar religious background, and fear of the "powers", to those early believers in Ephesus.

5.2 The supremacy of Christ Jesus in African theology (1:20-23)

Mbiti collectively describes the inhabitants of the spirit world in African religion as "mystical powers" or "spirits"; Ferdinando describes them as "spiritual forces", "powers" or "spirits"; Moreau simply describes them as "demonic" (cf. Mbiti 1991:70, Ferdinando 1991:34, Moreau 1990:130). However we may view⁸⁸ the metaphysical "powers" in African Traditional Religion, it is undeniable that the inhabitants of the spirit world⁸⁹ do create insecurity and fear among traditional Africans. The Ephesian author goes to great lengths to demonstrate the lordship of Christ Jesus over any and all "powers", both named and unnamed (1:21). According to Paul, the seemingly powerless and executed Jesus now occupied the position of cosmic power (1:20, 22) due to his resurrection, enthronement, subjugation of everything and his headship over the entire cosmos for the sake of the church.

⁸⁸ Western scholarship is dominated by an anti-supernaturalistic worldview that understands the African concept of "spirits" as a construction of the human mind. This neurophysiological explanation does not necessarily invalidate other possible, including supernatural, explanations of the spirit world (cf. Ferdinando 1999:84-85).

⁸⁹ The inhabitants of the spirit world include divinities, nature spirits, evil spirits, guardian spirits and ancestors (or human spirits) (Moreau 1990:102). It is interesting to note that in African Traditional Religion there is rarely the belief in a spirit being equivalent to the biblical notion of "Satan".

This insight regarding the comprehensiveness of the lordship of Christ Jesus could, as Allen similarly observed in 4.3.3 above, not only affect the African believers' personal inward being, but the total spiritual framework in which the believer, inwardly and outwardly, lives and relates to God, the world, and the "powers". Past western missionary teaching in Africa has often neglected to focus on *Christus Victor*, with the result that the felt needs of Africans were not addressed. An example is the need for, or perceived need of, salvation from witches and evil spirits (Ferdinando 1999:3). Jesus Christ has often been portrayed as capable of saving the believer from sin, but incapable of dealing with ancestors or warding off evil spirits. Syncretism of aspects of the Christian faith and traditional religion, as allegedly also practised by the first-century believers who came from a religious background (cf. 2.3.9 above), has thus been the result in many believing communities all over Africa, as people seek refuge in traditional methods for dealing with traditional problems. The Ephesian author's portrayal of Christ Jesus as supreme over all things, including all "powers", could be helpfully employed to broaden the African believers' understanding of Christ's cosmic redemption, which includes Christ's triumph over all the "powers" of darkness and the subsequent implications for daily living. One implication will be dealt with in the following sub-section.

5.3 The African believers' protection from the "powers" (1:19)

Mbiti, as quoted in 5.1 above, believes that the fear of magic, sorcery and punitive intervention of the ancestors is one of the most negative aspects of African Traditional Religion. Human agents are believed to bring about suffering by the manipulation of psychic power (Ferdinando 1999:39). The traditional African is therefore preoccupied with resisting and destroying threats to his well-being that may result from the accumulation of power against him, through the use of ritual and traditional medicine⁹⁰ (Ferdinando 1999:41). Some Christian

⁹⁰ The Bamucapi movement in central Africa sells charms to the general public for their continued protection against witchcraft and "spiritual" attack (Ferdinando 1999:115).

churches in Africa have in large measure accepted traditional beliefs about occult aggression and so employ anti-witchcraft methods reminiscent of those found among adherents of African Traditional Religion (Ferdinando 1999:116). In 4.2.2.c above, it was observed that Paul believed the exceedingly great power of God (1:19) was available to the Ephesian believers through faith in Christ Jesus. Wendland & Hachibamba helpfully note that according to the Ephesian letter, the Lord Jesus Christ is not only the gentle Saviour-Redeemer, but also the almighty sovereign creator and controller of the universe. Furthermore, by virtue of the soteriological Christ-event, this divine potency is immediately accessible to any and every believer (Wendland & Hachibamba 2000:346). The Ephesian believers' former practice of magic, and their veneration of Artemis for protection against hostile "powers", was thus no longer necessary, as a greater power was available to them.

African believers who view Ephesians as sacred text, containing insights for living the Christian life, may find the concept of God's power at work in the believer to be a comfort and reassurance, particularly as it eradicates the perceived need of alternative protection from spiritual and mystical "powers". God's exceedingly great power was able to protect the Ephesian believers from the aggression of the "powers" and, it is assumed, is still able to do so in the African context. Ferdinando believes that although "divine resources are available to believers as they actively engage in the spiritual struggle", the believer is not guaranteed immunity from physical assault by the evil "powers"; rather, the believer's perspective on such assaults is fundamentally changed (Ferdinando 1999:404). Believers who treat Ephesians 1:15-23 as sacred text may be encouraged to observe that because the triumphant power of God in Christ Jesus is at work in them, the "powers" are under God's sovereign control and can only therefore operate within predefined limits. The affirmation of Christ's sovereignty over every power does not necessarily mean that Christ *will* protect the believers from every "spiritual" attack, but rather that Christ *could* protect the believer if he chose to do so (Ferdinando 1999:394), and, as per the rest of the letter, that God will equip the believer to deal with any spiritual attack (6:10-12).

5.4 Conclusion

The argument throughout this paper has intended to show how the influence of the religious climate of western Asia Minor and particularly the cult of the Ephesian Artemis of the first century AD influenced the content and terminology of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Should this influence be taken seriously by biblical scholars, it would open many avenues to the biblical interpreter for exploring how the text may be put to fruitful dialogue in the African context, where similar issues relating to real or perceived "powers" exist in the socio-religious climate. Of particular importance is the proclamation of the relevancy of the Christ-event to believers in Africa, especially with respect to the Lord Jesus Christ's triumph and supremacy over the supernatural "powers", as a means of liberating African believers from previously held attachments to supernatural protective remedies, in favour of a trust in the supreme Christ for ultimate salvation and spiritual protection.

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